NAAGPHAANS- Maithili novel written by Dr. Shefalika Verma. Translated by Dr. Rajiv Kumar Verma and Dr. Jaya Verma

NAAGPHAANS



Maithili novel written by Dr. Shefalika Verma in 2004.
Arushi Aditi Sanskriti Publication, Patna.



Translated by Dr. Rajiv Kumar Verma and



Dr. Jaya Verma

Associate Professors, Delhi University, Delhi.

PART –I

Standing near the transparent glass-wall of her flat, Dhara was looking at the boys and girls returning from their school. Dressed in navy blue uniform, some of them had also put on sweaters – they were divided into groups. Some girls were going alone – snow also started falling.

The frozen ice of last night had covered the black road like a white cloth and the garland of snow was sparkling like small ice sparklers – cool but pleasant and fresh air was refreshing the mind and body, the sky was overcast with black cloud as if the entire universe darkened like an unending night. Nature with all its proud movements made the whole environment enchanting.

The British children were full of mirth and joy, playing with one another. Some children were throwing ice on their friends, some others were trying to collect ice in their hands like a flower, atmosphere was agog with enjoyment. Another group arrived, one girl collected a piece of ice and pushed it inside the shirt of a boy – the boy started jumping, dancing awkwardly as the ice entered inside his shirt. After sometime the boy retaliated and started chasing the girl with ice in his hands, caught hold the girl and pushed the ice inside her school dress, the girl screamed and all the students started clapping with joy. White cheek of that girl reddened but she kept on smiling. Dhara used to witness these scenes everyday. The activities of these students were the only active and dynamic point in the peaceful, disciplined and regulated life of England. It seemed the life existed here only, the movement was there, otherwise men working as robot, leading self-centred life.

Dhara used to sit near the glass-wall of her flat at the time of Kadamba's arrival, the speed on road made her static life active. She had always waited for Simant in the same way. The heart started crying – when she used to live with Simant, she always sat near the window waiting for him – at that time life was enjoyable and full

of excitement in the midst of struggle. Dhara kept on thinking – her life was empty, only Kadamba was shining like a pole star. In England, she was with Kadamba for the last one year. He brought her to England through lots of love and persuasion.

2

What are you thinking Ma? Dhara got surprised to hear Kadamba's voice. Nothing son, what to think of? Ma, please do not tell a lie. You are blessed with vast ocean like thoughts – I know all these and he kept his hands on mothers's shoulder with love and care. Ma, let us go to Blackpool today to celebrate the weekend. Dhara tried to say, what is the use of visiting Darkpool/ Blackpool in this dark life? Simant has made her life dark but Kadamba is her life's polestar – in this empty sky only shining polestar, outshining many suns and moons. Kadamba was an engineer, getting a job at Wigan in U.K. He owned a small flat with a beautiful garden and a car, but had no time to stand ,stare and spare. He worked all through the day, achieving too much in little time through hard labour and perseverance.

But Simant was obsessed with worldly life and comforts and had no desire to meet his wife and son.

Let us go Ma. Time is flying. I have no words to explain the beauty of Blackpool. Besides, we will not get parking space due to weekend. She wanted to keep some eatables. Why Ma? We will take lunch in some good

restaurant. Dhara hurriedly dressed up and sat in the car. Kadamba fastened her seat belt and got himself tied in the seat belt. Dhara never liked the seat belt as she felt imprisoned. Ma, if you do not tie it, I will be fined $50 by the police – Kadamba told me while driving. Road was flanked by electric poles on both sides, fitted with TV camera. Here car maintains a speed of more than one mile in a minute , Kadamba tried his best to convince Ma. Really, Kadamba has become matured.

So much of composure, so much of knowledge – and particularly so much devoted to mother. This song was being played in the car – Tum na jane kis jahan mein kho gaye, hum bhari duniya mein tanha ho gayein.

Dhara rested her head on the seat- back. She has lost everything in her life. Where is Simant? What is he doing? He indulged himself in all kind of vices and had earned money by hook or by croock. Right from beginning he was a pure businessman – running after money, ignoring himself, his family. Due to accumulated merits of past life, she was blessed with a son like Kadamba. Otherwise Dhara’s life was really pathetic.

Ma, do not worry for anything. Man does not have anything in his hands. Whatever is to happen, will happen – we all are puppets—then Kadamba spoke in a serious voice – Papa may be somewhere nearby. They were crossing through a city named Entry which was an industrial centre, with second largest race course of the world – in future we might also visit this city. Dhara also started thinking about Simant’s whereabouts, but her face remained expressionless. She told Kadamba, look,

wherever he is, should be hale and hearty. I feel happy to just have vermilion in his name.

The car was speeding, but Dhara's thoughts moved faster. Why do not you drive the car, Dhara asked Simant, resting her head on his shoulder. Look, the master never drives the

3

car, but always hires a driver, it shows his status. What a status? Many persons driving their own car are bereft of status or reduced to low-born? Dhara always wanted Simant to

drive, to sing and she sitting besides dreaming seven colors of life. Simant used to spend minimum time with Dhara and if sometimes they were together in car, the presence of third person i.e. driver irritated Dhara. Right from beginning Dhara was a rebel, but not obstinate and in-disciplined – however, she never liked to carry out obsolete traditions.

Dhara once asked Simant, who is the person whom you always give valuable and costly gifts? I have earlier pardoned Tarang didi, now who is this new person in your life? You may be of a good character, but money is not everything in life.

Look Dhara, what is good, what is bad, leave this to me. You always try to impose your imaginative pictures on others.

You are right. I always tried to impose my ideals on you all. I always run after others to fulfill my ideals, but yet to meet a complete human being.

Complete human being, Simant laughed, Dhara, are you complete, do not you have weaknesses, limitations, demerits. You look for merits in others, why do not you look the same for yourself ?

The speeding car suddenly shifted from Highway to Motorways. Dhara's thoughts also moved to the narrow lanes of motorways. It seemed Simant had really attacked her soul. Dhara always aspired for an ideal, disciplined and well-regulated life. She used to get up before sunrise which she inherited first from her parents and then from in-laws.

Getting up on time, by 7 am everybody was free from daily chores, by 9 am coming together at breakfast table, the routine followed religiously by everybody right from master to servant in the house. Dhara's disciplined attitude was reflected everywhere in home, dustless furniture, everything well- arranged, young ones paying respect to elders and elders caring for them, nobody was allowed to cross the limits of relationship. Everybody had a place in Dhara's large heart. She

considered other's sorrow-happiness as her own, she tried to inculcate all good values in her husband and son. She tried to upgrade their existing good quality, she considered it as divine creative work and her precious gift to mankind and society. If she saw anybody with shallow heart and baser qualities, she was not able to tolerate that person and his very presence resulted into mental agony – this was the complex mental attitude of Dhara which was both easy and difficult to comprehend.

Ultimately what happened to Dhara? Faces of Akash, Tarang, Simant, Vanya and Jalad all danced before her eyes. She considered Akash as the ideal person. I became overjoyed to see you laughing, Akash had once uttered. Laughter! Laughter has got so much of importance? Everybody heard the laughter but why only Akash was affected?

Ma, this is Blackpool – the lights there appeared as countless stars dancing on earth- they were visible from a great distance. In the darkness of night, the lights presented a beautiful picture as if all planets, stars, sun and moon have descended there. The vast sea

appeared limitless and unending, couples in two piece clothes were moving, engrossed with themselves, unaware of the surroundings.

Nobody bothered for others. Male- Female both liberated, enjoying cigarettes, satiating each others desires – really it was altogether a different world on this earth.

Ma, this is Lancaster, the road was up and down and zig-zag. It was a hilly area. Kadamba told Dhara that car was now crossing through the Lancaster canal – both sides of canal were flanked by green fields on which the sheep were grazing. Under the canal bridge, rows of houses of uniform height and design looked distinct . They never go for white-washing ,Dhara asked. Yes,they can, but will have to seek government permission, but nobody has a spare time for these things.

When they reached Blackpool, Kadamba told Dhara, Ma, this is roller-coaster, it is the largest and the fastest train of the world. Perhaps dangerous also, Dhara asked. Kadamba laughingly replied, Ma, you have always said that life is a challenge, accept it.

Dhara smiled. She observed that many British children rode on the roller-coaster, tied the belt and when it moved ferociously at a break-neck speed, they started making loud noises, hue and cry, almost screaming. Dhara thought that the British made their children strong and independent through these activities. What a dangerous play roller-coaster was, as if people threw their children in fire to struggle, accept the challenge and fight the battle.

Sea waves were continuously returning to shore – trying to permanently get united with the shore, but constantly falling on the sands and returning back unsuccessfully. Dhara's life perhaps resembled the sea waves. She was now all alone due to her insistence on high ideals to be followed by everybody. She felt almost tied in a Naagphaans and its venomous sting on her entire body.

NAAGPHAANS-PART_II

Once Dhara had visited Liverpool with Kadamba. Dhara was surprised to see the historical grandeur and culture of Liverpool. This place was situated near the mouth of river Mersy which was 142 kms. long. Mersy river has originated from Irish sea. The earliest construction in Liverpool was an 11 kms. long dock built in 1715. Dhara stood near the dock and listened to Mersy river's scaring sound. On the other side of the river Dhara saw beautiful lights and inquired from Kadamba about it. Ma, it is Viral, Kadamba replied. How can people go to Viral – is there any bridge? No Ma, there is a tunnel inside the river and people cross to other side through it. Dhara was shocked and scared with mere imagination of a tunnel under river. Car, bus, truck all crossed through it – it was well-lit and airy. Dhara felt suffocating just thinking about it. Kadamba laughed – Ma everything is possible- all these are fruits of science and technology – men have made tremendous progress – Do you see this Albert dock , it is the earliest dock. England traded with the outside world through this dock – the African slaves were brought to this dock and spices arrived from the West Indies.

Ma, let us go to the oldest restaurant of Liverpool, Kadamba said. The restaurant was located on one side

of the dock. Large buildings hovered the road from both sides – they represented the architectural style of the early times. Bombay's Taj Hotel, Gateway of India and Kolkata's Victoria Memorial were all parts of this style of architecture.We reached near a secluded forest area. Small restaurant named Brittania was located there. Following was written on a copper plate – Wheat Bread, P.L.C. 1742 , which meant this restaurant was constructed in the year 1742. Parking space was packed. There were several wooden tables and benches outside the small restaurant. The lights of the Viral city were clearly visible and enjoyable even from this distance – I do not know why there was Diwali everyday in England ? Summer had already arrived but the wind was cool and refreshing – but Dhara went into past, recalling – to whom she became close, they left her, to whom she loved, they deserted her- it was Dhara's fate – nothing remained , nothing …..

Ma, come inside the restaurant. Dhara followed him. Everywhere British people sitting in close proximity – all couples. Air was full with cigarette smoke. Pub was located in one corner. Kadamba took his mother to non-smoking zone from where Dhara was able to observe through glass panes the sorrow, pain and loneliness of River Mersy. Beautiful, scantily dressed British girls worked as waitress, moving in a mechanical manner and continuously smiling like machines. Really, they were quite disciplined. Restaurant was

2

over-crowded, yet peaceful – no hue and cry, no tension. A boy wearing a track suit entered the restaurant with a beautiful girl but with heavy bottom resembling two falling
big stones. Both sat on chair facing each other, looking directly into eye , forgetting the world. The secrets of

body and soul are really astonishing, what kind of pleasure is derived, nobody is certain, different ways to satiate and seek pleasures can never be explained.

Dhara had become used to visiting these places with Kadamba. Initially she had felt uncomfortable. But search for Simant had made it possible as he could be located in one of these places. He must be a great drunkard, a money making machine and a women seeker. Kadamba was silently looking in the eyes of his mother. Since the time he gained consciousness, he remembered the resemblance between the lotus flower of his village pond with that of the emotional eyes of mother. Mother's eyes always had a kind of sadness resembling the evening sky, but her face always smiling. Both mother and son shared a very loving relationship but there was a sea like distance between them due to son's respect towards mother. Inner feelings are one thing, but to exhibit the same is altogether a different matter.

Ma, why you have named me Kadamba?- he had inquired this when he was a child- this Kadamba flower becomes lifeless in two days. Mother had embraced him saying , no son, you are not the Kadamba flower of this earth, you are that Kadamba tree on whose stems lord Krishna used to climb – I have filled you with love as vast as the universe. You are the ornamental symbol of your parents' vast love and faith. We have inculcated in you the feelings of universal brotherhood. Listening to these words Kadamba was overjoyed to be linked with lord Krishna. Ma had taught her the great lessons of love and faith. Whenever human beings chose dark, doubtful, faithless path, their fall was imminent and inevitable. This earth survives on faith – faith in god helps in day-to-day life, faith in mother secures love and protection

for child and faith in teacher secures knowledge for him.

A newly married bride leaves the loving and protected world of parents to lead life with an unknown person – this relationship is also based on faith. When this faith will disappear, human life is bound to touch the lowest ebb like the unlimited and unmeasured depth of sea. Human beings will feel excommunicated or exiled like Pandavas through gamble.

Dhara remembered her mother's utterances– Dhara is now grown up, we must look for a suitable match. Papa used to laugh and said, Dhara is not our daughter, but our son – do you not see how educated and cultured she is? You always consider her as your son, but we have to get her married. – I am also worried, I also understand everything, but right now let her complete her studies, if we marry her at this juncture, her career will be ruined in household chores.--- If we wait right now, then when we look for the bridegroom, we must not get the ideal choice – mother's voice was unstable and full of doubts. If I fail to express like you, do not think I am not serious – Papa spoke laughingly
3

– I am also worried about my daughter's future. Look Dhara's mother, when some drop of swati nakshatra falls on earth it disappears, but if falls in an oyster, it gets converted
into pearl. I am waiting for the same oyster for Dhara where our Dhara will live as pearl – Look People give birth to children, make them capable, get them married and become free from their responsibilities. After that love for grand-son, grand-daughters and the worldly life moves so on and so forth ….. Mother replied philosophically, alright, when we get a good match, we will get her married. Father said mockingly, how can we judge the goodness of a human being.

If the parents are cultured, liberal and tolerant, the offspring must be good, Mother's words surprised both Dhara and her father. Ultimately fathers' words became a reality. After her Post-Graduation, she was married to Simant, meritorious and good natured. But nobody on this earth knows what is stored in future. Dhara recalls the wedding song—
'Dhir dharu janani adhir ati jani hou, kahu kiyo bheti sakai vidhi ker rachna …'

As parents' loving daughter, adolescent Dhara, playful and lost in her dream world now enters her sasural as Simant's wife, overburdened with new responsibilities. How the freedom loving daughters with their happy go lucky attitude make their sudden transition as daughter-in-laws at someone else's home—ready to fulfill high expectations of people all the time. No one feels the pain she goes through – she was the loving daughter of her father who overlooked all her mistakes and gave freedom and liberty required for development of personality. But with Dhara's marriage, her sasural got a full time unpaid maid for life time who worked tirelessly for her in-laws, then for her husband and lastly for her children and their off-springs – a maid without salary. The family is complete with the coming of daughter-in-law, but the girl gets imprisoned fulfilling family's aspirations with all restrictions imposed on her. In spite of performing all household chores, she lacked the right to question anybody. But there were always some exceptions to this rule.

The preparation for Dhara's marriage was in full swing, everybody was overjoyed. Dhara's heart was also full of hope, joy as well as the unknown fear – looking at the seven colors of Rainbow Dhara wondered – where was

she going from here, what kind of life she was going to have? Birds in several rows flying in the sky singing the song of freedom, Dhara also started flying high in the large unending sky- free , uninterrupted and uncontrolled. Dhara's thoughts were blowing like a wind.

Dhara's body, mind, heart and soul were satiated with Simant's love. Simant never imposed any kind of restrictions on her mind and thought. Simant's love energized her to face the unknown challenges of life. Dhara remembered – one day she was asleep. When Simant came back from morning walk, he hold a beautiful fragrant red flower in his hand. He secretly kept it on Dhara's face. Dhara got awakened due to soft touch of fragrant flower. Simant murmured in her ear, Princess of Flower. Dhara laughed freely. It seemed goddess of nature dawned on this earth. You will love me forever, Dhara

4

asked. Is there any doubt? Dhara felt Simant's loving and caring hand on her soul, on her body. Simant also started playing with Dhara's long and beautiful cloud like hair and
entered into his sea depth thoughts to attain the pearl like happiness. It was such a bliss undiscovered in any garden of the world.

Kadamba was born. Dhara felt like goddess due to labour pain and her contribution in this new creation leading to continuity of universe. Birth of Kadamba added to her responsibilities. Kadamba's oil massage, his bathe, his daily chores – whenever he slept Dhara tried to finish her household work. Sometimes when Kagamba awakened in the midst of work, Dhara ran to calm and pacify him. Simant was sitting nearby but he

never took the child in his arms to calm him. Instead he used to shout, what are you doing? Kadamba is crying. She came from kitchen almost running and hold the child with either flour or spice laden hands. Simant always reacted, BAAP RE, you do not have any manners. You do not know how to live. You behave like a village girl.

Initially Dhara was shocked with these outbursts. But gradually she undersood that in some cases the birth of a child brings parents closer and in other cases the vice-versa happens. Simant developed the feeling that Dhara was paying more attention to child thereby ignoring him. Dhara always thought that Kadamba was known by her fathers' name, not by her name. Whenever she visited her parents home people used to say, look at Dhara's son, her total replica – Dhara derived satisfaction. Yes, Kadamba is my son, my child, --there nobody even took the name of Simant. But outside NAIHAR , from SASURAL to anywhere within own country or foreign, everywhere he was known as the son of Simant – then why women are ceaselessly working at home day and night?, What do they get in return even after surrendering their very existence?

Child is born. The entire family is overjoyed. Child descends like a moonlight. But nobody is sure about the future of the child. In child's innocent eyes and smile parents forget their sorrows. Child automatically understands the love and very presence of mother. Mother in turn understands child's gesture. But these things will continue for how long………………………………
……..

PART –III

The life cycle goes on. Nothing remains permanent – Simant's love also started vanishing. Always busy with his work, he started ignoring Dhara. Dhara's was not able to bear this attitude. But Dhara also realized Simant's helplessness. Whenever she complained, Simant used to reply, Dhara, you do not understand. If I work hard, it is for your welfare and betterment. These days if you do not have money, you will not survive. Moreover my business requires me to be always on run. Even I also do not like to be on run, away from you. I always think about you and try to give you the best.Dhara's attitude gets softened. Even Simant was not at fault.

One day Simant not only suggested but almost compelled Dhara to join some job. Kadamba and Manjul both were studying outside. Dhara remained alone. Dhara's heart started boiling, like a tornado. It was a bold and courageous step for Dhara to join a job away from her husband and that is also in the land of Mithila. When the entire world was witnessing feminist movement, in the land of Mithila, woman talking to another man was looked down upon as immoral and she was declared characterless. In this environment, Dhara's step was really bold and courageous.

Dhara's wavering thoughts, vacillating moods and meandering emotions always invited comments from Simant, I understand, you are a writer,a poetess,a mother and a wife, all in one, really overburdened. Simant made his decision clear- Dhara, I want you to join some college as a lecturer. I remain busy throughout the day. Most of the time I am out of the town. Kadamba is also studying outside this small town. You will become engaged and your writing will also continue. Initially Dhara hesitated and after some dilly-dallying she started applying for job in different colleges, ultimately getting appointed as a lecturer but not in a

college of her small town but in a different city away from Simant

Simant asked, what are you thinking Dhara? Replied Dhara, nothing. But I cannot stay away from you. I do not want to join. Simant tried to convince her, we will stay together during vacations, you can also make progress as a writer, writing day and night. I will tell everybody, Dharaji is my wife, Kadamba will tell Dharaji is my mother. We will feel proud of you. I will embrace you saying I have embraced such a great writer. Dhara was enlightened. She became confident and determined. But how can I stay alone in that unknown city?

2

Unknown city – Simant replied – do you remember Akash? Right now Akash is posted there – you will get an acquaintance even there. Dhara went into past- She had met Akash in a Kavi Sammelan. Akash was the chief guest. He was enchanted after listening to Dhara's poem. They became close friends. The ringing phone brought Dhara back to present.

Hello. Dhara, I am Akash speaking. What are you doing these days?

As such nothing.

Why you are replying in such a feeble and low tone?

No… Nothing.

Did you receive any news from Simant? Whether he is coming?

No, Dhara replied in a tired voice – I received his letter but due to his busy time

schedule he is not able to come and I am feeling quite lonely.

Why? What is the matter?

Dhara remained silent.

You become silent all of a sudden as if the string of Veena had broken.

No..No.. there is no matter to worry. Simant had done one good thing he got phone connection installed here – which makes my lifeless existence alive.

Telephone -- Akash asked laughingly- how?

Sometimes I get your call and become happy.

Akash Babu kept on laughing.

Such a wonderful family—Dhara, Simant, Kadamba and Manjula—full of love, similar thoughts, similar expression, similar experience- everybody was happy and contented—Simant had a small business, family had everything—" Aap bhi bhukha na rahe – Sadhu na bhukha jaye" – everybody had different dreams .

Once she had visited Birpur accompanying Simant. She stayed in a very artistic dormitory. Dhara was not able to believe her eyes that such an artistic dormitory was conceived and built in the district of Saharsa, Bihar. Later on Dhara visited it on several occasions. Clad in a blue saree, sitting on a blue chair under blue sky, Dhara

thought – the blue colour of sky has faded as the hidden partial truth of human heart fades away. Human beings never automatically believe the truthfulness of the heart, they tend to live in the false world.

Dhara developed emotional attachment towards Birpur dormitory. The peaceful seclusion of this place resulted into creativity… various poems composed, many articles penned down. In the evening Simant's friend asked her, Bhauji, are you happy being all alone whole day. Dhara replied laughingly, I never feel alone in this dormitory. Everybody was overjoyed and said, we all are grateful to this dormitory. Simant also had the feeling that Dhara always accompanied him to this place due to attraction of this dormitory. He felt free to pursue his work. He wanted to provide at least this small happiness to his newly married wife.

3

Didi, I have come back home early as college is closed today, told Rangama. Please give me a cup of tea Rangama. Tea has been her best friend. People say that they forget sorrow after drinking wine. But Dhara felt happy after a cup of tea. Sometimes she thought of cancer caused by this habit of taking excess tea.

She started sipping the tea.

May I come in?

Dhara was taken aback, Akash Babu -- door is ajar, please come in.

Today college is closed.

Why? asked Akash Babu.

I do not know the reason.

You are really amazing, Akash lit the cigarette and said whom are you remembering?

Dhara tried to reply – you, but was not able to speak. She was not sure why even at this advanced age her behaviour was childish and why she was trying to behave like a teenaged girl by replying 'you'. But who can understand the feelings and nature of Dhara's heart.

Akash said, Dharaji, do not consume so much of tea. You have just had it.

Akashji, you should also not smoke continuously. However, I am very much fond of the smoke of cigarette as it seems the cloud is dancing. But it is injurious to health.

Dharaji, I can not live without cigarette. My wife hails from village. Even she does not like cigarette. She is not able to tolerate its smell. But if men do not smoke how can they struggle and face the vagaries of life.

Why you are not staying with your wife? Dhara asked.

I am alone in the family. Father is quite old and staying in the village. Thus, wife along with three children is with him. My wife Tarang is looking after our vast ancestral property.

Dhara took a deep breathe – they shared the same pain – then why people get married, Akash Babu. What is the significance of such marriage?

It is already 1 p.m. – looking at his wrist watch Akash stood up – you are yet to freshen up – I am really a big fool, just beating about bush and wasting your valuable time.

Dhara wanted Akash to stay back but was not able to stop him. Her soul was crying – do not go Akash Babu, do not go. I am already a broken person. You can not understand how your proximity makes me alive. But she kept mum and just uttered, come again. Akash left and Dhara went for another cup of tea. Dhara remembered Vanya's story. Vanya had advised her – Dhara, do not rely on males – you are very innocent. You easily believe everybody. And then Vanya told Dhara her pathetic story. How she loved Jalad who was already a married person – how she got trapped in her affair with Jalad.

Jalad enticed her and at the same time told her wife how he is befooling Vanya just to expose that she is of a mean character. Vanya herself heard it. If others have told her about this, she would have never believed it. She countered both of them and told—thank you very much for playing with my emotions and immediately left the dazed couple.

4

Dhara, I deeply loved Jalad. He cheated me, but he was not at fault. It was clearly my fault trying to break his married life. But I never thought that he would play with my emotions– Vanya started crying hysterically.

Please calm down Vanya – life is full of struggles.

No Dhara, how can I calm down. You do not know my complete story. Do you want to listen?

After that incident, Jalad,s wife narrated it to my neighbour Murti Babu whose wife Reena was like my sister. Now under her influence, Reena also humiliated me.

Reena told me- Vanya, I have always cautioned you not to believe others easily. You innocently believe others and they kick you as a ball.

Dhara, Shakespeare has rightly said, Blow, Blow Thou Winter Wind Thou Are Not So Unkind As Men's Ingratitude.

Dhara I did everything for Reena didi and her family. But unflinchingly Reena didi told me – I treat you as my sister but….

Dhara, I lost patience but failed to retaliate due to my emotional nature – I can only give my love to everybody, can not hate anybody.

Dhara consoled Vanya quoting Bachchan, Main chhipana janta to jag mujhe Sadhu samajhta, Shatru aaj ban gaya chhal-rahit vyavhar Mera. Really these sentences expose the reality. Vanya, never have two thoughts – who is good or who is bad? Nobody can answer these two.

Vanya replied – Dhara, you are right. If the relationship survived by blaming me, I feel fortunate. If somebody's married life remains intact, I will never care for the blemish of my reputation. God is observing everyone.

That day I was sharing lunch with Reena didi from the same plate and I had no inclination that her heart was engulfed by the venomous

NAAGPHAANS. Dhara, what should I do now?

Vanya, nobody can damage others reputation. But certainly enemies are preferable to these kind of friends. Now I am also scared to know about these self-centered, self-indulgent and self-seeking persons.

PART-IV

Brooding darkly over the tragic story of Vanya and Jalad, Dhara felt whether she is being meted out the same treatment – is Akash an emotional flirt ? – no, no Akash's high thinking and plain living is reflected through his innocent eyes and straight talk. Dhara also used to forget everything in his company and always tried to question why she felt attached to him? Tagore's letter became her life – " akalyanak marg mein namhar yatra se thaki sandhya ke ahank achanak sakshatkar viruddha samyak madhya avanchhita parichaya."

In this long and unpredictable life, the relationship between human beings might take many forms – but her relationship with Akash Babu is different – is it physical, no…. not at all—is it mental attachment? Yes, but these days who believes and accepts it. Who understands that mind has its own world in which many palaces are built and demolished, it is like sand palace in which there is no durability, no longevity.

Mind wants somebody, spends a few moment with that

person – it is momentary but tempting and fascinating. Ramayana contains the qualities of ideal woman – Dhara had a bitter smile – the best woman was that who never thought of any other man even in her dream – really, our society subordinates womenfolk through these ideals. Why she is treated as property? Dhara wanted this sick society to get rid of ritual ridden religion. Sita had undergone ordeal by fire which is still continuing whatever may be the context.

Vanya had once told Dhara – it is very difficult for a single woman to lead a peaceful life. Dhara realized it and replied – Thakur Saheb's wife accompanied by some women visited me and inquired about Gautam Babu's welfare. I was shocked and asked who is this Gautam? She told me why I am pretending as if I am not aware of our neighbour Gautam Babu. --- Vanya, in fact I had never thought about Gautam Babu.

Vanya also discussed Akash Babu – these days everybody is talking about him. Dhara replied – people might discuss Akash Babu, but I will never sever my relationship with him. He is my friend, philosopher and guide. I would have severed the relationship had it been sinful. Vanya, why the relationship between man-woman is interpreted in only one context. Can there not be a normal relationship between the two based on Satyam ,Shivam and Sundaram?

2

Vanya replied – right from the beginning of civilization people attach just one meaning to this relationship.

Dhara asked Vanya, you teach Arthasastra but you are specialist of philosophy of life.

Vanya – I have not done any research but only leading

life's philosophy. In the process of understanding Arthasastra in portions, I have unintentionally divided my own life in portions.

Telephone bell started ringing. Dhara ran and received the call.

Hello, I am Simant speaking.

Yes I am Dhara, speaking in a stable tone.
Oh Dhara, you are yet to sleep.

Dhara – can you come here for few days?

Simant – what is the matter Dhara? Are you serious?
Dhara—yes, if possible …

Simant – okay, I will try my best. I will come on one condition.
Dhara – what ?

Simant – till I reach there, you will keep on smiling. You are speaking in such a dead tone, I feel dead.
Dhara – why this silly and nonsense talk? I do not like it.

Simant – oh sorry. Now I will speak directly in front of you.

Six minutes are over – voice from Exchange interrupted.

Simant – okay Dhara, I will definitely come. Good night.

Dhara went to bed and tried to sleep. But her mind was troubled and disturbed due to the irresponsible talks and comments of the people.

Simant always tried to console her -- Dhara, people cannot see the heights you have scaled. Immoral eyes always look for immoral things. Impure mind always think impure – erroneous heart always misconstrues – people lack the insight to understand you.
-- Jaki rahi bhawna jaisi , prabhu murat dekhi tin taisi. You have more than performed your duties towards others, but in return what you have got?

3

Dhara started recollecting—she was the owner of a proud and satisfied family, with vast property in village. But after the death of father-in-law, the younger brothers of her husband became the owner of the property.
Simant had once told her – you are the eldest in the house, owner of the property. I am always busy. You should go to the village to look after everything.

Dhara - Nobody needs me there.

Simant- why? my younger brothers are there, your sister-in-laws are there. Old mother…….Go there at regular intervals and look after agriculture and allied activities.

Afterwards Dhara had spent some time in the village. One day , in the Gosai ghar i.e. place of worship, she recalled – why Sita left everything and accompanied her husband? Sita really loved Ram. It was not merely love , but she was incomplete without Ram. Dhara realized the same – why I am staying back in the village? Nobody needs me here. And when Dhara decided to leave village, nobody tried to stop her, rather everybody was overjoyed.

What did she get in return for her sacrifices? She had to join service, followed by people’s comments on her character. Why people unnecessarily point finger at anybody’s character? Even Jesus Christ was tortured and nailed. Dhara also felt nailed, she wanted to leave the job and the city.

But no city is bad by itself, but its culture, its contacts and its conservative attitude make it vulnerable. Till these distortions are rectified, human being will not change. Mrs. Thakur, Mrs. Jha , nobody is to be blamed as they are guided by these distortions.
When Simant comes here, I will clearly tell him that I neither want to continue with the job nor want to remain in this city. To her, Simant was the life giving sun. God in the form of man.

Dhara recalled her meeting with Kadamba’s neighbour Dr. Andrews and his doctor wife Reshmi. They had two small children Newla and Earl aged six and two years respectively – it was their small world. Doctor’s life in England was quite difficult and complex. They enjoyed all the richness of life, but at the same time were overworked. They were completely accountable to their patients – patients were considered as god and doctors as slave. Patients had the right to sue doctors for irresponsible behaviour and acts. Dhara felt the need for accountability on doctor’s part even in India.

One day Reshmi asked Dhara – how do you spend the day?
Dhara replied – reading and writing. I have already read the works of Shakespeare and Elliott.

4

Reshmi – Newla goes to school daily, but Earl is too small. He needs proper care. Can I leave Earl at your place for the whole day?
Dhara – I will consider myself fortunate.

Reshmi - Dharaji I will leave Earl at your place on one condition. You will have to accept four pound per hour for this.
Dhara – Reshmi, I am not a child-minder. I will certainly look after Earl, but please no payment. You already know Kadamba is earning four thousand pound per month.

Reshmi – Dharaji, do not take it otherwise. Everybody is earning here. Even unemployed gets bonus from the government. All old persons whether British or any other nationality get support from the government. Here money has no value – but work is valued as it represents the capability, the empowerment. Four pound per hour is nothing but you will feel working and even I will have no guilt.

Dhara recollected – in India many students tried to take tution from her – many teachers were minting money through tution, but Dhara never agreed for it

Once Simant had also advised Dhara to coach the students.

But Dhara lived in a different world i.e. the world of Wordsworth, Shelley, Keats and Shakespeare. A college day friend had told Dhara – whenever I see you I remember these words from Wordsworth's poem entitled She Dwelt Among Untrodden Ways, – 'A violet by a mossy stone and Fair as a star, when only one is shining in the sky, half-hidden from the eye.'

Dhara was always lost in her own world. While teaching in the college she used to enter in the inner core of the poem recollecting words from Shakespeare's poem entitled Carpe Diem –' O mistress mine, where are you roaming?

Dhara always appeared to be searching – as if somebody was waiting for her. She behaved like the female character of Sharatchandra whom nobody could pull to the materialistic life.

Dhara was wandering like Kamayani's Shraddha to meet a complete human being.

But when Dhara came out of the world of Wordsworth, Shelley and Keats, she came to understand the reality and remembered Shakespeare's word –' Blow, Blow, thou winter wind, Thou art not so unkind As man's ingratitude.'

PART-V

NAAGPHAANS PART V

Dhara received phone call from Akash.

Akash – I have got a happy piece of news for you. Tarang has arrived from village.

Dhara – I am really happy. May I join you on break-fast.

Akash – Why not? It is my pleasure. I also wanted to

invite you. You understand my inner feelings. After break-fast you will also have to take lunch with us.

That day Dhara was really happy. Tarang didi's modest personality charmed her. This meeting has changed Dhara's life. Tarang treated Dhara as her loving younger sister. Dhara became a regular visitor to Tarang's house.

One day when they were busy talking, a voice interrupted them – May I come in?

Simant entered and after embracing Akash, said – What a pleasure! You people are having a real blast.
Akash – What a surprise? When did you arrive?

Simant – I wanted to give surprise to Dhara. But I never thought to surprise all of you.
Looking at Dhara Simant asked , how are you?

Dhara shaking her head said- I am fine.

Dhara was overjoyed to see Simant.

Simant staring at Tarang said – May I know your introduction?

Akash – She is my better half.

Simant said interrupting- No, no …. Not better half but best half – because without them we do not exist. Tarangji, please make tea so that we can enjoy the tarang of good tea.

Tarang - I will prepare tea. But you will have to stay back for dinner.

2

Simant and Dhara remained wide awake throughout the night busy in endless talk—Dhara, you do not worry for anything. We have to shape the life of our children, Kadamba and Manjul. Both are in boarding school. We require money for that. I am earning only for you,. for our children. What is the matter Dhara?

Dhara – Nothing serious. But without you life is miserable here. People make comments, fabricate stories about me --- Dhara told Simant everything – her own ordeal and Vanya's story.
Simant patiently heard everything and laughingly said – Have you gone mad? Had I known singing I would have sung – kuchch reet jagat ki aisi hai harek subah ki sham hui – tu kaun hai tera naam hai kya Sita bhi yahan badnam hui …. Dhara, I believe you more than myself. Should we follow our own mind and soul or be guided by people's opinion?
Dhara, I know that Akash is a very good person – both of you live on literature – you derive satisfaction talking to each other- I understand everything.

Tarang once asked Dhara – why do you feel lonely?

Dhara – didi, women are as mysterious as nature is.

Tarang - Dhara , women are not mysterious. This universe is made of five elements – nature was thus created – human body is also made of these five elements- earth, water, vayu, agni and akash – this earthly body ultimately gets dissolved in earth. There are lots of resemblance between nature and human being. How does moon rise?- how sun rises and sets? – why waterfall is continuously flowing. – every particle of nature is mysterious. How many examples should I cite

– Why famine occurs?- why flood recurs?- even scientific discoveries are not able to unravel nature's mystery- then how can we unravel the mysterious human mind?- can you totally read anybody's mind and thoughts? – Tarang was speaking intensely and continuously.

Dhara – didi, why it appears to me that each and every particle of nature is suffering? Once I had accompanied Simant to Kosi barrage – massive dam on frenzied and hysterical Kosi river – 52 iron gates to tame the river- but like wounded lioness, the river was trying to cut loose with furious sound- I felt terribly frightened and my heart bled to unwind the river. Didi, I am not able to withstand anybody's pain and grief.

Tarang – please calm down Dhara. You are very emotional – your inner core is imbued with pain and sorrow. You have child like innocence which takes you close to god.

Dhara – didi, you live in village. How did you attain the highest level of maturity even by staying there?
Tarang – maturity does not come only in a city. Whether literate or illiterate, everybody is blessed with heart full of emotions and desires. Everybody is blessed with some hidden treasure.

3

Dhara was shocked and surprised—wife of Akash Babu- such a scholarly and emotional lady. –Didi, please tell me about yourself.

Tarang – What should I tell? I do not have time to dwell on these things. I am overburdened with my responsibility …..

But Dhara was able to comprehend something unusual

from Tarang's gesture. Reality was something different. Each person has his/her own inner world unregulated by any law, rule, custom , tradition, culture and sacrament. That inner world consists of the most dear thing,a person or a feeling with which the human being comfortably and smilingly travels the life's difficult journey. As the furious river Kosi was tamed, the human beings also have to control the floodgates of emotion. But those who live with the inner world do not need any fetters or shackles to control.

Dhara remembered the cataclysm caused by Kosi. Before the Dam was constructed over Kosi, the parents of the newly wed daughters prayed to Kosi for their safe passage with the promise of ' chhagar-pathi- sinnur' offerings to mother Kosi.

Dhara enquired from Akash about Tarang's behaviour.

Akash replied – when I was about 19 years old I got attracted to my bhauji. Bhauji compelled me for intimate relationship . One day my elder brother caught us red handed. After that incident I never met them. I started hating bhauji.
Later on I met a beautiful girl Lata who was daughter of my fathers' friend. We deeply fell in love. But she got married to a rich boy. I had the satisfaction that she is happily married. One day when I visited her place, she totally ignored me. I was shattered. Till date I am not able to realize my mistake. Since that day onwards I have started hating women. I got married and my wife became victim of this hatred. But she is very tolerant. I used to study till late hours and she cared for me with sleepless nights. Ultimately as a result of her patience, tolerance and silence I started loving her and our son was born whom we named Sneha. Now I am totally

devoted to Tarang and Sneha.

Dhara realized the noble heart of Simant -- Simant completely understands me. Why do not people understand me? Dhara started crying.
Simant – Dhara, in order to understand an emotional woman we also need to have a large emotional heart. Please do not cry. It is already late. Let us now sleep.

Simant was peacefully asleep – Dhara's mind was traveling in the sky like a weightless 'semer' flower – Simant has great faith in me – I need to live up to his faith. I lack faith in myself but I have faith in Simant's faith—Dhara's mind was building sand palaces, sometimes dismantling the same. In that palace, faces kept on moving – sometimes beautiful and pious Tarang – sometimes serious, stable and intellectual Akash – sometimes unfettered, committed and jovial Simant.

4.

One day Tarang asked – Simantji, have you noticed one thing ?

Simant – What is the matter Tarangji?

Tarang pointing her fingers towards Dhara and Akash, said -- please realize the implication of their names .
Simant -- Yes .. yes, the name suggests that they should be together.

Akash – You said that we should be together ….but in reality Dhara and Akash can never be together --- yes, they might meet but only at frontier i.e. Simant, and that is also at a hypothetical point – and that is the only proper place.

Simant – Proper or improper, now only the togetherness

of Akash and Dhara is proper.

Both Simant and Tarang laughed.

Simant – Dhara, you are not speaking anything. Are you serious?

Dhara- What should I speak? You people are making fun of me.

Simant – Dhara, do not be serious – you are always mine. Now please give us a smile.

Simant and Tarang again laughed looking deeply into each other's eyes. For a moment Dhara was taken aback.

One day Dhara was unwell. She was weak and bed-ridden. She also became suspicious of the gestures of Tarang and Simant. But at the same time she felt pity on herself for this suspicion. She thought - I always want to meet Akash Babu. And was never prevented by both Simant and Tarang. Then why should I doubt their relationship?

Dhara had once asked Akash about the nature of their own relationship.

Akash – relationship of soul, of feelings – it can not be limited to any boundary – there can be no Lakshamana-rekha.

Dhara – Then what is it ?

Akash – Brotherly --, no..no.., but the same emotional feeling. I will always pray for your happiness.

Husband --- no..no.., but I will always protect you.
Lover – I am not sure, but I am your real friend , your real well-wisher.

Dhara was able to recollect the words of Akash and her Naagphaans like suspicion about Tarang and Simant got eliminated. She desperately wanted to meet Tarang. She hurriedly
5

got dressed-up and went to Tarang’s house. Main door was ajar. Dhara entered the drawing-room. She heard some whispering voice – I can not live without you Tarang – I have spent sleepless nights… Simant, I am also impatient for you.
Peeping through the curtains, Dhara saw Simant embracing and kissing Tarang.

Dhara was dazed. She felt Naagphaans all around her body. In front of Dhara, Tarang and Simant felt lifeless and guilty. Dhara never discussed this episode with Akash. Tarang departed for village. Simant continuously pleaded for pardon. Women always forgive the men and particularly the husband. She surrenders to her husband – not as a loser but always as a winner. BUT WHETHER DHARA WAS ABLE TO PARDON AKASH FOR HIS CRIME ?

PART VI

NAAGPHAANS
PART –VI

Ma .. Ma – Dhara open her eyes after listening to Kadamba’s voice. She felt exhausted reliving her past throughout the night – but still she remembered that they have to visit London today.

Dhara and Newla sat in Kadambas’ car and Reshmi and

Earl in Andrews' .

Dhara was most impressed by the Service center in England located on Motorways after every 15 or 20 miles. For a brief rest and light snacks … these service centers rival any five star hotel in India.

The car was racing with almost 100 miles speed – it crossed many rivers such as Soar, Swift -- many places like Northampton, Daventry – road flanked by the vast green fields – at some places herds of cows were seen grazing – on both side of road there were some trees resembling Babul with green leaves vying with one another to come out. Other fascinating trees were those of Bluebell flower, Oak tree, Chestnut tree and Pine tree. Really, countryside has stunning scenic natural beauty.

Kadamba told Dhara about the cities of Northampton and Daventry.

Kadamba -- Northampton is a large market town and contains many beautiful places such as Abington Park Museum, Northampton Museum and Art Gallery, Sywell Aviation Museum, National Waterways Museum etc. The Holdenby House and Gardens was built by Sir Christopher Hatton to entertain Elizabeth I. It became the palace of king James I and the prison of his son king Charles I.

Dhara – I have read that both James I and Charles I belonged to the Stuart dynasty. Charles I was involved in the civil war and was hanged by the Parliament. Now tell me about Daventry.

Kadamba- Daventry is also a market town in Northampton shire consisting of modern houses and

some small industries.

2

Nature with all its beautiful colours and shades was ruffling like ornamental saree over the earth. Stunning natural beauty in Lake- District up to Dove cottage. Dove Cottage is a house, best known as the home of William Wordsworth and his sister Dorothy. At this place Wordsworth wrote some of his finest memorable poems namely Ode: Intimations of Immortality, Ode to Duty, My Heart Leaps up and I wandered Lonely as a cloud. Snow- clad mountains, dense forest consisting of tall trees, birds chirping on trees – it seemed, Wordsworth came alive here – Dhara yearned to settle here – free from the maddening crowd and the shackles of life – if nobody wants me then why this wandering?

Black cow is worshipped as goddess Lakshmi in India, but here they are common due to their large number— Indian cows appear very soft and innocent, but British cows appear to be ferocious – in England there is beef culture – so perhaps in vengeance the cows metamorphosed as the ferocious Rudrani.

It was 1 pm in the day – raining in the morning – a bit cold also but after 10 am the sun came out, the sunshine was pleasing – the roof top of car was open but covered with net. Sunlight on windscreen was shining like crystal.

Kadamba – Ma, in Britain we are blessed with an amazing system of Motorways which has the highest design standards for speed, safety and fuel efficiency.

Dhara – What about the speed limit?

Kadamba -- Motorways originally had no speed limit and

were designed for traveling up to 100 mph. Although the original speed of 100 mph remains, the majority of motorways are now subject to a national speed limit of 70 mph.

Dhara – Why lanes are numbered?

Kadamba - The lanes in a given direction are numbered sequentially from nearside as lane 1, lane 2, lane 3 etc. The inner lane is generally intended for normal steady driving, while the other lanes are intended for overtaking or passing slower moving vehicles. The Highway Code states that vehicle must pass on the right.

Dhara – What about road signs?

Kadamba – Most road signs and pavement marking materials are retro-reflective, incorporating small glass spheres or prisms to more efficiently reflect light from vehicle headlights back to the driver’s eyes.

Dhara – What about Driving licence?

3

Kadamba – Ma, in England you may easily qualify all the examinations except driving test . People get the licence only when they become experts. Everybody is leading a disciplined life.

Kadamba parked the car near a service center -- Gateway of London – Welcome break – it was a big

center surrounded by grass field , beautiful Tulip, Daffodil flowers. Transparent hall inside which people were seen taking snacks and drink. It is London's welcome break. Dhara thought Simant could have easily brought her to this place as he was a regular foreign traveler.

Kadamba – Ma, service center is a public facility, located next to motorways at which passengers can rest, eat, or refuel.

Reshmi and Andrews also followed them.

Reshmi – Are you tired didi?

Dhara- No Reshmi. I never get tired. Moreover, whenever I visit a service center I feel delighted – Surrounded by the stunning natural beauty and the fresh flowers, the center always invigorates me.

Andrew – Didi, let us go inside to have light refreshments.

They entered the service center. The transparent floor seemed slippery. Dhara was surprised to see the well-maintained clean toilets. She tried to recollect the memory of dirty and ill-maintained toilets in India. Here everybody is aware of his/her duties – everybody is committed to cleanliness.

The British subordinated us due to our weaknesses. But once we realized our strength and became united, they were forced to leave India. Nevertheless many problems still remain.

Reshmi – Didi, we have ordered chicken nugget pastry, potato finger chips and cold drinks for everybody.

After a brief sojourn at service center, They left for Swami Narayan temple.

Andrews – Didi, is there any similarity between Taj Mahal and this temple?

Dhara – Yes. Taj Mahal is considered as one of the wonders and a fine example of Indo-Mughal style of architecture.

4

Kadamba – But Taj Mahal is mosque where as it is a temple.

Dhara – Taj Mahal is not merely a mosque – it is a great symbol of love – it provides peace to soul – each and every particle of Taj Mahal is imbued with love.

Kadamba – Ma, those, not able to build it are devoid of love?

Dhara – Love is everywhere. But Shahjahan had the capability to build it and as a result of beautiful craftsmanship, it has emerged as the 7th wonder of the world. Kadamba, have you noticed this fact in India – why husbands build houses after the name of their wives – it is token of love.

Kadamba – Very true Ma. In school days one of my friends had told me the same.

Dhara- Look Kadamba, at the time of marriage both bride and bridegroom take the oath of assisting each other in happy and difficult times. To provide all kinds of

amenities, safety and security to wife is certainly the symbol of love.

Reshmi – Kadamba, you have lost -- you cannot defeat didi in debate, she is a Professor.

Dhara – Reshmi, it involves heart, so in it my being Professor is of no significance.

Kadamba – Ma, you are correct. Reshmi children can never defeat their parents. Now let us enter the temple.

Dhara – Kadamba, please tell me about the significance of Swami Narayan temple.

Kadamba - Ma, Swami Narayan Temple is Europe's first traditional Hindu temple and an international socio-spiritual Hindu organization.

Dhara – Who is Swami Narayan ?

Kadamba – Bhagwan Swami Narayan is a spiritual leader. This temple is a masterpiece example of Indian stonework and craftsmanship with towering white pinnacles, smooth domes and intricate marble pillars.

Kadamba further said – Ma, this temple is made of 2,828 tons of Bulgarian limestone and 2,000 tons of Italian marble. The temple was constructed at a total cost of $ 12 million.

Dhara visited the entire temple complex including the exhibition entitled Understanding Hinduism. The entry ticket to the exhibition was $2 per person.

5

She also visited the cultural centre Haveli constructed in Gujarati haveli architecture. She saw main hall consisting of nine pillars. Each pillar contained fine sculptures of God Vishnu, Shiva, Surya, Ram and Krishna.

The main door of the garbhagriha was closed. Dhara sat near a pillar thinking about her purposeless movements from one place to another like a leaf separated from the tree.

God please give me shelter – I can not bear my painful existence any more. Her eyes became wet. She remembered line from Bhagwad Gita – ' Kaon upai karab hum aali, Krishna bhayo kubja bus jayi.

How is Simant?- I am also responsible for the present situation – I was never serious about our life – our house collapsed like a pack of cards – my decision to join a job and the resulting separation from Simant really ruined my life

. Wife- husband should always live together. Dhara was never ready to join any job but Simant persuaded her – She herself wanted to become worlds' most intelligent and dashing woman – a firm believer in vasudhaiva kutumbakam – but in real life people in the guise of snake is biting her all over as suffocating as Naagphaans. She had read somewhere, pita ko diya gaya wah shrap, Nahush ke ye putra kabhi khush nahin rahenge – Dhara thought my father was also cursed by someone – your daughter will never remain happy.

PART VII
NAAGPHAANS
PART –VII

Dhara felt sick and bewildered – what she achieved in life – she neither remained with her husband nor was able to get her daughter settled. At least God was kind enough to have blessed her with a wonderful son Kadamba. He was the only solace in her otherwise dark life.
But has anyone understood the movement of time? It appears to be slow – by the time one realizes it, finds himself engulfed by Naagphaans. Dhara remembered her last meeting with Akash Babu. That meeting completely shattered Dhara – she always considered Akash as a godly person, but reality was otherwise. After that incident Dhara lost faith in mankind.

The entire scene appeared before Dhara's eyes like a movie reel … one day Dhara visited the house of Akash Babu. Akash was happy to see her.

Akash – Dhara, please be seated, I will make some tea for you.

Seating alone in the room she started looking here and there, finding a blue colour diary.
Dhara started turning over the pages, on one page she found the following- " the spring night is on wane but I keep on writing to you. Shaking, shivering, trembling – I am really thrilled. All of a sudden my heart started longing for you Dhara. I still remember my first meeting with you – I was totally mesmerized. I got attracted towards you, knowing fully the ultimate result. I wanted to tell you everything, but lacked courage to do so. I always tried to look into your eyes in search of love. Just a mere accidental touch of your fingers used to make me wild. In my imagination, I grasp you, kiss and caress

you. Yes Dhara ..yes .. yes, I express my desire for you through these words of George Moore :

Let me lie,
Let me die on thy snow-covered bosom
I would eat of thy flesh as a delicate fruit
I drunk of its smell, and the scent
Of the tresses
Is a flame that devours.

2

One day while observing my palm you asked me about your place in it and my reply was 'in the centre'. But I have no idea about my place in your palm, in your life -- perhaps I am there or nowhere – I may be in delusion or illusion, may be in deception, may be in faith, may be in affection or predilection, may be in love or warmth – where I am .. I am?

The diary pages were fluttering in Dharas' trembling fingers – as if each breath of Akash began forming lines – each and every word of diary appeared as snake- bite. Akash Babu's passionate craving for me, his ecstasy, his sadness or heart wrenching emotion ..Is it the reflection of his deceptive and distorted personality? She felt Akash had a demon like longing for her. She felt her entire emotional world as NAAGPHHANS. That day onwards she started hating Akash. Due to Dharas' indifference and disregard, Akash also distanced himself

from her.

Somebody asked Dhara – When the door of the temple will open?

Kadamba replied – Only five minutes are left.

A Gujarati woman greeted Dhara with folded hand – namaste bahinji.

Dhara – Do you live here?

Woman – No, I have come from Basildon.

Dhara – For how long you are there?

Woman – Now it is more than ten years. What about you?

Dhara – I have come from India for a short visit. My son is working as an engineer.

Woman – From India. I have not been able to visit India for the last seven years.

Dhara – Have you come from Gujarat?

Woman – Yes..yes. How did you realize?

Dhara – Don't you know that personality is a reflection of one's own culture and
life-style that becomes its identity.

3

Woman – Are you a Professor?

Dhara -- How did you realize?

Both of them laughed at this question.

Woman – I have got a large factory in London. Bought a house at Basildon – I am
Priya.

Dhara - I am Dhara. Meet my son Kadamba. Why home at Basildon?

Priya - London is overcrowded. Many people work in London but stay in surrounding
County.

The main door of the temple was now open. Everybody stood in queue for darshan. Main temple belongs to Purushottam Bhagwan Swami Narayan who is considered as one of the incarnations of Lord Vishnu. Large and gorgeous statues of Gunatatanand, Mulakshabrahma, Gopalanand Swami, Mahamukta, Ghanshyam Mahaswami were also installed in the temple. On both sides of the temple, statues of Radha-Krishna and Hanumanji presented a marvelous scene.

Large number of Indians had thronged the temple. Some British women were also in the queue.
Andrews – Didi, this temple provides solace to our heart. The peace and the calmness of this place seem like heaven.

Dhara – Yes Andrews, the peace and calmness of the Lotus Temple in Delhi give us
the same feeling. In Lotus Temple there are no statues, chairs are kept inside
and people sit there for ten to fifteen minutes for meditation.

Priya -- Have you had darshan? Meet my husband Harish Khemaniji.
Harishji, she is Dhara.

Dhara - Please meet Andrews, his wife Reshmi and my son Kadamba.

Andrews – Harishji. What about your profession?

4

Harish – I have got my own export-import business.

Andrews – Export-import of what?

Harish – Motor parts etc.

Dhara was startled – Kadamba was also surprised to hear motor parts but kept mum.

Andrews – It seems you keep on visiting India.

Harish – Yes, why not .. whenever need arises.

Kadamba – Are you in touch with everyone who comes

here from India for business?

Harish – No, no .. it is not possible. But in Southall we have our Association office
where the name and addresses of everybody is maintained and recorded.

Kadamba – It is almost like Indian Embassy.

Harish – Yes, it is like that.

After performing puja, they came out. Dhara was holding Earl, being followed by Newla. Andrews and Harish were chatting. Reshmi and Priya were also interacting. Kadamba was silent – everyone was immersed in thoughts or chats.

All of a sudden Andrews spoke – Why not visit Southall. Let us go there for Indian food.
Priya replied – Yes ..yes. Let us go to some Indian Restaurant.

Southall in London was heavily populated mainly by the Indians, whether Hindus or Muslims, it was dominated by them. Southall resembled Delhi's Kamlanagar and Karolbagh markets, Patna's Sabjibagh , New market and Hathua market – all the items were being sold on pavements. Southall Broadway is the only place where one can see everything Asian, from food, spices, clothes, restaurants, take-away. Southall has the largest Asian community. It is like little India.

Andrews – What are you thinking Didi? Here the market timing is from 9 am to 5 pm.
People are not overworked. There are many British whose bank balance is not

more than $50, but no one can beat their will to live an energetic life.
They also receive financial assistance from the Government.
After 18 years everyone is employed. Even aged people live their lives to the
fullest. Even the patients are treated at Government expense. They
hardly care for money or bank deposits.

5

Dhara – Yes, I am surprised to see everyone going for shopping – how do they manage
shopping on such a large scale- is it a part of their hobby?
Andrews – Yes, shopping is their hobby. Even unemployed gets bonus from the
Government. Indians also get loan worth $2000 for starting some business.
Some of them disappear with that money.

Dhara became upset when Andrews referred to business. She started looking here and there lest she gets some information about Simant. In London, Simant had been involved in the export business of Madhubani painting, Mithila's Mauni, Pauni, Kaniya, Putra etc…etc. In lieu he used to import motor parts to India. He also exported Madhubani paintings to USA, Japan.

Dhara went inside an Indian Restaurant, Reshmi and Priya followed her. They ordered chhole-bhature and lassi.

Andrews, Kadamba and Harish were still standing outside.

Andrews– Harish, we are looking for a person in England.

Harish – Who is that person?

Kadamba – My father Sri Simant. In India, he had a flourishing business. He was always involved in it and developed addiction for it.

Harish – Kadamba, England is a big place. If he was involved in business, we can get
details about him from our Association. Please have faith in god.

Kadamba – But till what period?

Harish – It is already 5 pm. Office must be closed by now. Do you have his photograph? I
shall enquire about him. Where are you putting on?

Kadamba – We have come from Leicester. It is almost two hours journey. We will be
back there.

Harish – You do one thing. Please accompany us to Basildon, stay there at our place, we
will also feel delighted. We will also chalk out our future programme.

Dhara was astonished to see the overcrowded Southall. People were speaking different languages, but full of love and cooperation. Commentator on Mahabharat had observed – in this world no one is superior to man. Chandi Das had also commented –' sabhi upar manus tahi upar nahi – this spirit was truly exhibited at this place. Hindu, Muslim, Sikh, Ishai … apas mein sab bhai, bhai.

Priya – What are you thinking Didi?

Dhara – At this place there is love and cooperation among all the communities. Why
lack of love and cooperation among them in India? Why can't they
co-exist there?

Priya – Didi, leave this topic. These things are linked to politics of vote in India. Here
Politicians do not ask for vote on these considerations. I have called you Didi.
Hope, you have not taken it otherwise.

Dhara – Priya, you could have called me Dhara, but you used Didi – it is now an
emotional bond. British say good morning, weather is fine with smiling faces but
devoid of emotions. But your heart is hungry for love, relationship, emotional
bonding. Yes I am your Didi.

In an emotional upsurge, Priya started weeping and embraced Dhara. They were overjoyed with this new found relationship and with the Basildon programme as well.

PART VIII

NAAGPHAANS

PART –VIII

After one and half hour drive they reached Basildon. This town is located in the county of Essex, 26 miles east of London. In 1946, it was officially designated as a new town and was created to relieve the overpopulated areas of East London.

Throughout the night Harish and Andrews tried to chalk out the next course of action – Easter vacation is on – office will remain closed till Monday. Tomorrow, it is just Sunday.

They already had their dinner at Southall. Priya served them coffee and mathari.

Andrews – I am delighted to see the coffee, but how did you realize that I am very much fond of black coffee.

Priya replied laughingly – it is experience and nothing else. What about tomorrow's programme.

Harish – Tomorrow? – please prepare Gujarati Dhokla and Ghujia for the breakfast, only after that we will move out – wherever the car takes us – Priya happily left for Dhara and Reshmi's room.

Harish – Kadamba, I have a friend who is really jack of all trades – he is leading life at various levels – he is a man with many standards.

Andrews – What do you mean by standard?

Harish – Standard, that means he is respected everywhere whether it is bar or pub, casino or so called high society.

Kadamba – Such type of persons also exist in the society

Harish – Yes Kadamba. Peter is really like that – he has mastered many languages such as Hindi, English, Russian , French and his friends are from diverse background. What is the time now?

Andrews – it is almost 12 pm.

Harish – He must be at home but drunk. We will contact him in morning.
They kept on chatting and finally fell asleep.
But in Priya's bedroom, Priya, Dhara and Reshmi remained awake.
Dhara – Priya, you have not visited India in the last seven years.
Priya replied abstractly- Yes.
Dhara – You are endowed with wealth. Here I find Indians visiting their native place after every two years. why do not you want to go?
Priya pressing her face against the pillow – Dhara, do you think all wishes are always fulfilled?
Dhara – You are blessed with everything – husband like Harish Bhai – gentle as well as millionaire.
Priya – Very true Dhara. Harish is my husband as well as my friend. He understands me completely – I think, more than my parents. I have two sons and one daughter.
Dhara – Where are they?
Priya – All of them are in India – elder son is in Forbesgunj, younger son in Kerala and daughter is in Bombay.
Dhara – Your empire is from east to west.
Reshma – Didi, Gujarat is your native place.
Priya – Yes. But Forbesgunj is in north Bihar at Nepal border.
Dhara became emotional and sentimental to hear about Forbesgunj. She herself is from Mithilanchal.
Priya – At Forbesgunj, he has his own business. My daughter-in-law is also a Development Officer in Life Insurance Corporation of India.
Dhara – Great. But from Gujarat to Forbesgunj – why? It does not sound convincing.
Priya- Richas' parents live there. Her father is a powerful person. His influence helped Rahul in his business. Now Rahul is also under his influence. Younger son Akshata is in Government service posted in Kerala. His wife

Akanksha is also a teacher in a Government school. Surbhi and her husband are Director and Managing Director in a Firm in Bombay.
Dhara – You are fortunate to have such a well-settled and wonderful family.
Priya – Yes Dhara, we live in our children- thinking about them always.
Reshmi – But even then you do not visit India.
Priya – It is already late in night. Let us go to sleep – Dhara understood that Priya do not want further discussion as she was hiding something- she was not prepared to unravel the rock edicts rooted in her heart. But Dhara herself was disturbed- Reshmi instantly fell asleep.
Dhara – Priya.
Priya – Yes didi.
Dhara realized that tears were oozing out of Priyas' eyes – entering into pillow.
Dhara – What is the matter Priya? You are hiding something. Dhara kept her hand on Priyas' head.
Priya became emotional with her touch and said – Dhara, why people are blessed with children? People sacrifice their happiness to settle their children – but in return what they receive – after the marriage of their children the parents' existence becomes aimless and purposeless. Children settle at their own home, have their own life – there the parents exist only like tatters on the Banarasi saree.
Dhara – Kadamba is still unmarried. My daughter is married. But my husband has forgotten us in his strive for fulfilling only materialistic ambitions.
Both of them were sad – the difference being of son and of husband.
Priya – I always used to visit my elder son at Forbesgunj. For parents all children are equal, but elder child enjoyed the special position being the first flower

of the love between wife and husband – initially they used to warmly welcome us – we showered love on their children. Interest is always dear. But Dhara, gradually we felt ignored.
Dhara – Why Priya?
Priya – One night daughter-in-law's voice reached my ear as a gliding snake – Richa to Rahul – I am overburdened, how will I manage?
Rahul – Why overburdened? Why you are depressed? Let me know. I am always with you. You leave your anxiety with me. Your smiling face propels me to work more.
Richa – It is my office time now. I have also to cook for mother – I am really overburdened.
Rahul – Why to worry for her? She can cook for herself. She has always prepared the food for us.
Richa – But I do not want her to cook for herself. Why do not you tell Akshata to keep her for a few days .
Rahul – Why not? If I tell him he can call Maa at his place – Why do you worry for petty things?
Priya – Dhara, I used to help them in household chores. I never gave them any reason to think about me. But they had developed a habit of leading a nuclear life.
Dhara – Priya, it is not wise to think about changing their life-style. We should never interfere in their life pattern.
Priya – No, Dhara. I never tried to intrude in their life. But out of love and affection, sometimes I gave them valuable suggestions. But you are right – we should never interfere into their life. I always thought that son grew up with parents, brothers and sisters but after marriage he sees them through the eyes of his wife. He forgets their love and affection.
One day I was not well- due to eastern wind, bones were full of pain. I heard some voice from Richas' room.
Richas' mother – Where is your mother-in-law?
Richa – She is sleeping.
Mother – Sleeping at this odd time. You are alone doing

household chores.
Richa – Maa, please do not speak loudly. If she hears it will cause unnecessary tension.
Priya felt heaven falling on her. Unnecessary tension – she has never caused any tension anywhere. She always co-operated with them.
Mother – Why she keeps on visiting you? I think, she is not on good terms with younger son and his wife.
Richa – What can I say Maa? I am already overburdened. After hard work in office, welcoming and serving many acquaintances in the evening – it is a tough life for me.
Dhara sympathised with Richas'life which is so stressfull. It has become a common problem among younger generation that they are easily misunderstood by elders. To Dhara , this generation is intelligent,more focused and motivated but at the same time equally responsible and sensitive to the human relations as well as their social surroundings.The only problem is that they need some time and space for themselves
which is mistaken for them as being individualistic .
Dhara recollects her thoughts . Her student Soma's life flashes before.How her condition was so pitiable. Soma was a tender girl emotional too. After six or seven years suddenly she saw a girl, touching her feet in the market……..mam do you know me…dhara tried to recognize her..are u Soma…? If I am not wrong
Yes mam. Now I am a lecturer in a private collage…
Dhara was very happy to see her favourite student. But was soma happy.?.

PART IX

NAAGPHAANS IX
Priya recalled – At Forbesgunj ,one day she felt

giddiness and fell on the bed – when she became conscious she found doctor checking her pulse – Rahul and Richa stood near the bed.
Doctor asked Priya – How do you feel now?
Priya – I am fine but giddiness is still there.
Doctor – I have the apprehension that you have spinal disorder. Rahul, please get her neck and back x-ray done tomorrow.
Priya had continuous vomiting – she felt all alone. Harish was busy with his business in England. He was aware of the fact that Priya loved husband and children alike. She cannot live without seeing her children off and on. On several occasions Harish advised her to stay with him. Children have their own family, their own life. Life has its own certain rules. Why do not you understand this? Every year Harish visited India twice. Rest of the time Priya moved from one child to another. Harish gave Priya sufficient money which enabled her to spend on her own, not depending on the children.
Rahul – Pranam Maaji. When did you come?
Priya overheard Rahul's voice which energized her.
Mother-in-law – I have just arrived Pahun. You have just followed me.
Rahul – Where is Babuji?
Mother-in-law – Busy with his work as usual. Thought Richa must have come back from office, I should meet her.
Rahul- You have done the right thing – we also feel happy to meet you – Richa is also overjoyed to see you. Otherwise this life is full of care and responsibilities.
2
Priya was disturbed as Rahul is yet to ask for her.
Rahul – Richa, have you served any refreshment to Maaji?
Mother-in-law – No.. no, please leave it. She is already overburdened with her office work. Moreover, guests are a regular feature. – Priya felt the blow on her heart.
Rahul – You are right. But you will have to take light

refreshment.
Priya was sill feeling giddiness – she desperately needed a glass of water to quench her thirst – she tried to stand but fell on the ground.
The thud sound made everyone surprised and startled – Rahul became nervous seeing her mother fallen on ground.
Priya was unconscious – her body was hot with high fever.
Mother-in-law – Rahulji's mother has fallen down. Now Richa, your bad days have arrived.
Tears started flowing from Priya's eyes – Who will understand the mystery of the tear drops? One needs mother's heart to understand this mystery. Every child understands the sacrifices and expectations of the parents when he becomes parent himself. But this realization comes too late – by that time the parents are no more.
Doctor arrived and asked – For how long is she unwell?
Richa – She was perfectly alright.
Rahul – No Doctor, some time back she had giddiness, her x-ray was done – spinal disorder was detected. She had medicines. After that she was fine.
Doctor – Now I understand the problem – She needs rest – her health should be taken care of.
3
Rahul – Is there anything serious?
Doctor – Nothing serious. But keep a watch on her as she has become quite pale and weak. Perhaps she ignores her health. Is she troubled by something?
Rahul thought - Why his mother is uneasy and anxious?-Father lives in England – I also remain busy throughout the day – Is Richa ignoring his mother?
Richa became worried as Priya was managing the entire household.
Priya – Dhara didi, we forget the incident but always

remember the sting. If I am innocent then I must forget the sting of that incident. Didi , it was one chapter of my life. If I tell you about another incident you will lose trust in any relationship.
Relationship is based on trust – if there is relationship there is family – family faces both the ups and downs, but didi thorn of sorrow resembles rose thorn, you tolerate rose thorn due to fragrance of rose. But even the god will not tolerate the sting of cactus or the sharp points of thistle. God creates flower and thorns for human being – even god is scared of thorns, himself living in beautiful gardens.
Dhara laughed at Priya's simile – she felt as if the ice of deep freezer started defrosting after several days – ice melted and got converted into running water. So was Priya's heart bleeding with emotions as if this night would never return – as if she will never get a friend like Dhara.
Dhara became serious – She understood that somewhere motherhood was severely wounded. Dhara felt scared of the treatment Priya received from her children.
Priya started crying . Reshmi was fast asleep.
Priya –Akshat took me to his place. Rahul had informed him about my ill-health. Akshat and Akanksha were busy with their lives, my grandson Piyush was always busy with his school and home work.
One day Akshat and Akanksha had heated arguments about their servant. Unknowingly Priya also got involved in it.
4
Akshat – Why are you angry at the servant, after all he is a small boy.
Akanksha replied angrily – Why, I can also shout at him – he is also my servant.
Akshat – I just want, we should not shout at him – if he is taking care of mother, let him do that – you will worsen your nature by shouting at him.

Akanksha – Oh .. will he only take care of mother?
Priya was taken aback – how she has come between wife and husband?
Akshat was also surprised – Why mother was dragged in it? And said -Yes, servant will only look after mother.
Akanksha – I have never said that he has to serve me only – I am continuously working like a servant. I do all the household work.
Priya interrupted and said – When you go to office who takes care of the household work?
Akanksha – Before leaving for office I always prepare the food.
Priya – Kaniya, there are many household works besides that.
Akanksha – Who tells you to do the work . Please take rest. I will do the remaining works after coming back from the office – Do not I massage you? Sometimes I do not do – Do not I make your bed? Sometimes I do not make it.
Priya wanted to say –' Please make corrections – Sometimes I massage – sometimes I make bed' – but kept mum.
Priya started crying near Harish's photo – You went to Foreign leaving me here to undergo torture – I can not live without you, please call me there. What happened to Akanksha? Why is she so short-tempered? Why is she so inhuman?
Akshat asked for dinner. Priya advised him – tell kaniya to serve you dinner. But Akshat did not utter a single word.
5
Priya heard some sound from kitchen – She went there and found Akshat looking for food. Priya put the cooked food in microwave and after sometime served it to Akshat.
Akshat – Maa, do not feel sad. She is childish – She is

unable to understand that the elderly anger is blessing.
Priya – Please do not be worried. Everything will be fine.
Akshat – Maa, you also take dinner.
Priya – No son – I will take dinner with Akanksha – you finish the dinner.
After dinner Akshat became busy with his office work and Priya watched T.V.
After sometime servant came in and said – Memsab is calling you for dinner. Priya felt bad – Why servant, Kaniya could have herself come.
She replied – Go and bring one roti for me. Servant brought one roti with vegetable – Priya became upset to get food from servant, thought kaniya could have served her – what samskar parents have given her – She has no respect for elders – Akshat remains outside throughout the day – he does not witness what happens here. He is like Shrawan Kumar to his parents -- and his wife … Priya herself had selected her – If you praise her she feels delighted – but if you give advise, correct her ways – she retaliates with extreme anger – so much so that she even does not care for her father-in-law – If somebody hits you with hand that could be stopped but if it is sharp tongue, you can not hold the tongue. Sometimes Priya wanted to say – shut up kaniya – you are staying with us not the vice versa – Why so much aggression- but looking at Akshat's face she always stopped herself – Why Akshat is to be blamed – It was Priya's mistake who herself took Akshat's consent for this marriage.

PART X

NAAGPHAANS X
Akshat – Do you know Akanksha, everybody gets overshadowed by Ma's personality. Her personality illuminates the entire family. You have time and again observed that Babuji reads each and every single line on

Ma's face – What Ma is thinking – Why she is thinking – Akshat had also studied the emotional heart of Ma – He had himself experienced that – but he had failed to convince Akanksha of the same, but his efforts were on.

Why do you interfere into the lives of children. Both son are well-settled, they have their own family – Now they should be left to take their own decisions – they should understand their responsibilities otherwise they will always look to you in the moment of crisis – Harish always used to advise Priya.

Priya understood this fact – she never wanted to interfere. Harish also advised her – if someone asked for your opinion, do not give – and if nobody asked for your opinion then never give it.

Yes I should never interfere – they have their own family- they are aware of their duties and responsibilities. Moreover, even I also have no time to spare. Akanksha was beautiful, blessed with all the qualities, but when something happened to her disliking, it enraged her and she appeared as volcano with anger. Sometimes Priya felt strong love for her – touching her chin she used to say – you are a very good kaniya – please always remain loving and kind-hearted.

2

One day when guests left, kitchen was completely disorganized and unclean – all the utensils were unclean and scattered – the remaining food items and dishes were also lying on the dining table.

Akanksha – Ma, please empty the utensils – I will clean them. Priya emptied all the utensils including cookers and dongas and adjusted everything in the fridge – only Priya could do this adjustment.

Akanksha started cleaning the vessels – She also kept on murmuring – How much could I do – everyday is a test for me. From tomorrow I will only prepare daliya, everyone will have to eat the same.

Priya silently continued with emptying the vessels – it was 11 o'clock in the night – Akanksha was annoyed – Priya was upset and thought – Why on some particular day maximum guests arrived? Atithi Devo Bhava – with this feeling all the guests were welcomed – she inherited this sanskar from her parents – but she was worried about kaniya. Priya told her – You please leave it, I will clean the utensils.

Akanksha – No .. No I will do it.

Priya then silently decided to do the entire household chores from tomorrow onwards.

Priya recalled her naiher [parents' home] and life over there – she had three sisters, father was very strict in their education – throughout the day all the four sisters remained busy with household works, at the same time they were always at the service of their parents – after 11 pm they got the opportunity to study for their B.A.,

M.A. – they had to battle against coal, wood and goyatha [cow-dung cake] – now replaced by gas stove, cooker, vim powder and many other facilities – Dhara, do you know - human beings are now enslaved by these comforts leading to physical disorder and many unwarranted diseases.

Dhara remained calm and mute. Priya went on and on – Akanksha cleansed all the utensils and retired to her bedroom. Then Priya rearranged the utensils such as plates, bowls, tureen, spoons, forks, ladle, spatulas, knives, whisks, glasses, frying pans, sauce pan, jugs, cup and saucer etc – cleansed the gas stove, collected entire trash in dust-bin. She was told from the very childhood that kachra or debris was never thrown in the night otherwise goddess Lakshmi would desert the house.

3

Priya became overtired and felt exhausted– moreover, servant had already left for his village. Even when servant was around, Priya used to manage the entire household work.

It is easy to construct a house, but its finishing i.e. wood work, grill fitting, distemper etc. is a gigantic and huge task. Similarly both cooking and cleansing are easy, but not the rearranging and dusting. Besides at this advanced age of 55 it is difficult to manage the household work – She thought – initially you are

expected to do your duty to please the in-laws, then to husband, then to children and now to satisfy bahu so that she remains happy – is this the life-cycle of every woman?

Akshat – Ma, what is the matter? – I see you brooding all day.

Priya – Nothing son.

Akshat – Ma, no doubt I am always a child for you but why this beguilement?

Priya – Oh my god. You always pester me. My only concern is how to make Akanksha happy.

Akshat – This is too much Ma. Rather it is her duty to make you happy. Do you know on occasions something happens to her when she starts behaving awkwardly – she behaves like a child.

Priya got disturbed – Akanksha should have respected her sentiments, cared for her knowing fully that her father-in-law is away from India. Right since her birth, daughter showers love and affection everywhere – daughter is like water which adjusts according to the shape of the vessel whether it is glass or jug or lota – it is neither her exploitation nor cowardice, but the high watermark of her magnanimous personality – she lives for everyone, she sacrifices her happiness for others and in turn gets happiness through sacrifices.

No efforts should be made to convert daughter-in-law to daughter. Daughter remains daughter and daughter-in-law remains daughter-in-law. Son is aware of each and every gesture or movement of mother. Daughter-in-law comes from a different family, a different background. She is not able to understand the inner sentiments and

emotions of mother-in-law.

4

But there are many examples where the girl from a cultured family becomes closer to mother-in-law than a son. At many other places, son starts looking at his parents, brothers, sisters through the eyes of his wife.

Dhara consoled Priya, saying – give up the hope for converting daughter-in-law to daughter. If she is able to perform her duties as daughter-in-law, it is sufficient. Every mother-in-law initiates her life as daughter-in-law and more or less undergoes the similar experience.

Priya – But didi, the house rests on daughter-in-law. Daughter has to leave her parents' house. Women's life has two parts – father's house and husband's house. At father's house, she gets parental love and care and at husband's house she enriches the entire environment showering the flowers of love, care, kindness and generosity.

Didi, there is also another dimension. These day parents unnecessarily interfere into the life of their daughter which ultimately destabilizes their daughters' happily married life. If mother-in-law exploits the daughter-in-law, there are many vice-versa cases.

Dhara – Priya, there were certain good things in our earlier tradition – it was always considered good to marry the daughter to a boy residing at far away places. Parents were not aware of her condition on daily basis. Daughters used to build their home bravely and gained self confidence by facing both the periods of happiness and sorrow alike Do you know Priya, in our Mithila area when daughter comes to parents' home from in-law's she is welcomed with stale cooked rice i.e. Bhat and Bari so that she should not stay there for a longer period.

Priya reacted laughingly – What a curious tradition.

Dhara – Priya, why to quarrel with a person whom you can not change. You should not argue with a person who is quarrelsome and obstinate. If you brood over your mistake, your failure, it will lower down your confidence, your self-esteem and finally your mental balance.

Priya – Then what should I do? How can I convince myself?

5

Dhara – What is under your control – your nature, your loving and caring attitude. IntellectuallyYou are an enlightened person. You can not help those who fail to understand you, unable to reach to your mental heights. If You can not control their behavior, their approach towards life, their mental faculty, their thoughts and

thinking – then why to worry, why to lead a stressful life?

If you are happy, Harish will be a happier person. If today children commit mistakes, tomorrow they will mend their behavior. Mistakes are mainly the by-products of the existing time and situation – afterwards they become matter of past – once there is change in situation, there will be change in attitude – only one thing remains permanent i.e. love and affection. Conditions are temporary but love is forever.

Priya – Didi, life is like a river but bounded with shores on the both sides – it is like a rose encircled with thorns – it is like candle light but braving the fierce wind for survival. No Didi, it is impossible to bear the bite and sting.

Dhara – Do you know Priya, - the river shores do not prevent the flow but protect it, whenever river wants free flow, it cut loose, breaks all shackles – Thorns protect rose from being plucked by unwanted fingers – fierce winds do not blow out the candle light but inspire and prepare it to face the hostile conditions and the challenges of life.

Priya – I can not compete with you intellectually – you are the source of knowledge.

Dhara – No Priya, each action has its own causation – do you not feel – Simant has settled down in England, now Kadamba has also joined a job here – if some event takes place in present time, it will be comprehended and understood only in future – You should look at the positive side of life which is full of happiness and satisfaction. Life is unknown like vast sky and

unfathomable like vast sea and this is the beauty of life. One experiences the life through ones' own eyes and heart.

PART XI

NAAGPHAANS X I
Dhara – Priya, I have seen my aunt – different varieties of mother-in-law exist in the society. They always blame their daughter-in-law. I feel ashamed whenever I remember my aunts' comments. My cousin Sukant had brought her kaniya through duragman. People thronged to see her – all the goods accompanying kaniya were spread on the floor - aunt was sitting besides the luggage and baggage, dala-dali. Someone asked if these goods came from kaniya's maika – aunt shouted – yes, yes and despised the goods sent by kaniyas' father. Aunt started throwing the sarees from the trunks with continuous murmuring – who will wear them? – your father has cheated us – my dreams have been shattered.
Dhara felt upset and emotion overwhelmed her sense of moral outrage. Hatred welled up inside of her. Only with great difficulty did she hold herself back with the thought – parents have given their dearest and precious gift, as such their heart i.e. their daughter – but here she is sitting in a corner as a neglected waste piece fully covered under saree.
Womenfolk made several comments – they have been fooled by girls' family. Otherwise boys' family easily gets rupees 5 to 10 lac besides car and other household goods.- If you do not ask for tilak or dahej, the girls' family will not oblige you on their own – they cheat the boys' family – everyone knows that in marriage boy comes for the bride, barat comes for food and merry making and boys' father comes for dowry.
Everyone forgot that they came here to bless kaniya.

A sad feeling of resignation settled over Dhara like smothering blanket. She took a deep breath and thought about dahej – she remembered once her father had told about it –
2
'Dahej is the payment in cash or kind by the bride's family to the groom's family at the time of marriage. It is associated with kanyadana where kanya means daughter and dana means gift. In ancient times, the dowry was considered a woman's wealth. However, over time, it has taken the form of goods and cash payment to groom's family.'
Dhara was never convinced by the logic behind dahej system. Fortunately she was married to Simant without any dahej. Simant was no doubt fond of good things in life but he was also opposed to dahej.
After she joined as lecturer in the college, Dhara emerged as champion of anti-dowry campaign. She associated it with deep rooted prejudices against woman and her consequent subordination and subjection. She herself wrote many articles in which the economic dependence of the woman was considered as the most important reason behind this system.
Coming back to Sukants' wife, Dhara thought - if the girl undergoes this kind of welcome in sasural, naturally she will not be able to pay due respect to her in-laws. Where bride is devalued in comparison to property, the in-laws can not expect a better deal for them.
Dhara recollected the following sentences –

Baba kaun nagariya juaba kheli ayalaun he
Baba kekara duaria hamra hayari ayalaun he.
Dhara – Priya, it is almost dawn – please take a nap. Always remember Priya, mothers' love is divine love. But when the son grows, difference with mother surfaces – it is difference between old and new, between male and

female, between emotions, between ideas, between mundane affairs – differences alone undermine the love. There are few mother- son between whom the love/soul relationship remains intact. Otherwise son forgets mother's tears, taste of her milk – and mother is also not able to comprehend sons' heart beat, but her love for son remains the same.

Priya – Dhara, for the first time in my life I have revealed my inner feelings before a genuine friend like you – I do not know you, you also do not know me, but this bond appears to be eternal – why and how I reposed my faith in you – Priya slowly and gradually went into deep sleep.

3

But Dhara was disturbed – she went on thinking and thinking – yes Priya, everyone needs
friends in life. She tried to recollect her own mistakes which resulted into her separation from Simant. She always tried to fly like a pipal leaf and never made any attempt to discover the truth. She lost Simant. Now she has to find him out at any cost. She felt desperation and moments appeared as era or epoch for her.

Weather was cool – Dhara went out in lawn with a shawl on her body and in the milky moonlight sat on a chair – she felt calm and relieved. Place was surrounded by small hills – Dhara heard scream of some bird – she wondered why this scream – human is chained by passport and visa not the birds – Perhaps bird is also separated from its partner. Priyas' life is also pathetic – her son and daughter-in-law's behavior also shattered Dhara – I am also desperate to see Kadamba married – will he also change after marriage – Dhara felt scared – pain is pain whether it comes from husband or son – relationship with husband is based on equality but with son – it is always unequal as mother is placed on a higher pedestal – son is the part of mother's own body – how can he be disrespectful to her – if it is – it will lead to her immense suffering.

One day Dhara told Kadamba – I have been receiving very good proposals for you – please select some girl. Kadamba replied – Ma, your daughter-in-law should be as simple, as good hearted as you are.
Dhara –Simplicity itself is not enough. She should know the proper art of living – she should look beautiful through good samskar not through artificial make-up. Your father always used to scold me – you lack sense of proper life style – you do not know where to speak and what to speak. You always believe others. Everybody plays with your emotions and your faith.
4
Kadamba – Ma, Papa must be aware of your true feelings.
Dhara – Yes and that is my strength – you are also not different from your father.
Kadamba – Ma, we know you – we respect your feelings – why you feel shattered and lonely. When you laugh, we all laugh – entire home smiles. Then in a serious tone he said – your daughter-in-law should also understand your inner feelings.
Dhara laughed and told – I have faith in myself. Daughter-in-law will become daughter through my affection. You remain happy and do not take tension.
Kadamba – Ma, everybody advised me to take IAS examination after engineering – but I was not convinced – collector/ commissioners are not able to maintain honour, dignity and decorum. There was a time when they were considered as the cream of society – but today they lack work culture.
Dhara – This is the most arrogant class. They reach the climax of arrogance just before retirement.
Kadamba – No Ma, those days have gone. Now they have to run after leaders and ministers, toe their line – this is the age of rag darbari. I am imbued with honesty which you have inculcated in me.

Dhara – Kadamba, do not be sad. You become a complete human being through Ira's great heart and Shraddha's great mind. If man becomes a complete man – it will be a great achievement. Wherever you are you will be the best. Everyone lives for himself but great are those who live for others.
Kadamba – You sacrificed your life for others – you forgot yourself in your attempt to unite everyone from naiher to sasural – you sacrificed yourself in order to build the career of your husband and children – why do you invite pain – what you have achieved?
Dhara almost trembled to hear this kind of explanation from her adult and matured son. She always tried to present a brave front before him – not as a vulnerable woman. She never converted her weakness and softness into powerlessness.

PART XII

NAAGPHAANS XII

Love has many facets – but has the same pain, same anguish and affliction – that is why mother-son, father-daughter, brother- sister, brother- brother, Laila- Majnu – everyone's
heart feels the same love-wave.
Men either overcome the challenges of life or succumb to the same. Dhara understands that man himself has to carry out his own burden and responsibilities. No doubt, he gets support as the vegetable vendor's basket is kept on vendor's head by others, but ultimately vendor himself has to move around with the heavy basket on his head. Father, husband, son – they provide support – however Dhara never considered it as total support.
But at times women completely leave herself on her son treating him as a strong tree. Dhara recalled the story of her friend Riya.

Riya left for village accompanied by her son Sailesh. Riya always considered herself as the protector of her son. But throughout the night- in that bus journey she slept keeping her head on the shoulder of Sailesh.
Ma, it is too cold, please wrap yourself with blanket – and Sailesh covered her with blanket – Riya remembered his father behaved in the same manner.
2
Beta, you also properly cover yourself, otherwise you will catch cold – you have to go back to Kanpur.
Ma, do not worr y for me. I am fine.
All of a sudden the bus stopped – perhaps it is Zero mile – passengers started getting down from the bus.
Ma, you stay back here. I get some tea for you. It will refresh you.
No beta, do not bother. I also accompany you. We will take tea there.
Please Ma , it is my duty, do not get down in this biting cold.
Riya left herself on him thinking – she is blessed with such a caring and loving son.
Sailesh is engineer in Kanpur – his wife Arya is also an engineer. During vacations they always come to Patna to spend time with parents. Riya has two daughters – Osha and Priyesha. Osha is married and Priyesha is continuing with her studies.
Riya was happy to see love among them, she was particularly pleased with Arya as she showers her love on all of them. Arya cared and loved her sister-in-laws. She never thought of herself but sacrificed for others – she treated her brother-in-law, sister-in-law as her own brother and sister. Arya belonged to a royal family – she was large hearted.
Riya recalled the story of her childhood friend Sheela – Riya, I cannot live any more, I want to die.
What is the matter Sheela? Riya was shocked and

surprised. Sheela had four sons – all of them were holding good posts but none of them had time for retired parents. How parents sacrificed everything in order to make all their children happily settled but the

3

same children were not ready to look after them when parents needed them most- it is world's most shocking reality.

You cannot understand my grief and anguish Riya – we work throughout the day but remain burden for them – Sheela started crying.

When Sheela was young she was devoted to her in-laws and treated them as god. She had heard somewhere that those who look after their in-laws get the same care and protection from their off-springs.

Riya I was married at a tender age and since then I have been working hard like a machine, looking after everybody's smallest needs. Now I cannot tolerate anymore – I have been dying to listen to some sweet voice from my son and daughter-in-law.

What about Sudesh? Does he care for you?

No no, Sudesh always works according to the whims and fancies of kaniya. He keeps on praising his sasural.

Sheela, it is not abnormal to praise one's sasural – it is a matter of pride that his sasural ..

Sheela interrupted and said – no Riya, he tells us, we do not know how to lead a descent and cultured life.

Riya laughed and replied – is it so? Sheela, why do not you tell him that you do not know how to lead a descent life but you know how to endure and suffer.

It was almost dawn. The morning sunrays had engulfed the Basildon. Dhara and Priya had entered into a new bond – a new relationship as if the two separated sisters have met again. They became one.

They visited Basildon tunnel which was well lit and considered as the second largest tunnel of the world. It was inundated by tourists from different parts of the

world.
4
Tunnel appeared both dark as well as well lit to Dhara. Without Simant her life was dark but others had illuminated her life.
They also visited Lakeside shopping centre. Dhara felt cold even when she was fully clothed.
They entered into an American Restaurant and ordered different varieties of burgers. Dhara just had some pizza. She was astonished to observe that in England people prefer cold drinks, juices to water.
Time was fleeting – Dhara was wandering in different English Counties. It was Easter vacation. For her it was the most appropriate time to look for Simant.
Kadamba – Ma, Easter is a very popular festival. As part of the Easter tradition, the British eat hams, lambs which are symbol of innocence. They gift Simnel cake to their mothers on Mothering Sunday. Chocolate Easter eggs also became popular as they symbolize new life.
Harish – It also involves Morris dance performance, Pancake race on Tuesday and special Easter parade.
Wordsworth had written somewhere – London appeared to be jungle of people. Dhara thought Kolkata was a bigger jungle of people.
They walked through Piccadilly, Trafalgar Square, Buckingham Palace, James Park, Big Ben, St. Paul's Cathedral, Shakespeare's Globe Theatre and finally reached Westminster Abbey Bridge on river Thames.
They saw the changing of guards at Buckingham Palace and the Horse guards parade. But everybody was looking for just one face i.e. Simant.
At Tower of London, Earl and Neula asked about the historical tales. Kadamba also told them about the crown jewels.
5
They had a grand view of London from the Tower

Bridge. Due to Earl’s insistence, they also went for Thames River cruise and it was fascinating to see London from there.
Kadamba – do you know Ma? – if Seine river is the soul of Paris, river Valtava of Prague, so river Thames the heart and soul of England.
Andrew – Dhara didi, Thames represents the history and culture of England.
Nobody knows – Dhara’s heart is also a treasure trove of hidden history- she tried to smile.
Nothing lasts. Easter vacation also ended. Dhara also returned back to Leicester.
People cannot comprehend the magnitude of darkness. Sometimes even the goal is not visible. After so much of wandering, Dhara felt exhausted and disappointed. Whatever I want, never get and what I get, that never makes me happy. Man is a puppet in the hands of fate. Man dances according to fate. Everybody is sad and unhappy from within but appears to be happy to the world.
Is there any end to Dharas’ suffering?

PART XIII

NAAGPHAANS XIII

That day with Simant – Dhara’s head rested on his chest --------

Dhara, do you notice sunrise? Sun’s bright rays remove darkness slowly and gradually leading to ushering of tomorrow. Each sunrise results into tomorrow which converts into today.

Dhara, we just need light of knowledge to remove darkness. Light comes and darkness disappears. Even a small candle light braves the darkness, finally emerging

victorious. We only need strong will and desire to achieve.

Dhara took a deep breathe in Simant’s heavenly embrace. Her eyes closed but looking through the entire universe – complete silence – Dhara was able to count her heart beat – initially she confused it with Simant’s heart beat – she ultimately realized the heart beat represented the bliss of togetherness, the zenith of happiness. Dhara stared at Simant’s face –

My love has never made you captive. I never obstructed your path – your success is my happiness. I want you to scale the heights of success – Dhara clung to Simant like Deepshikha – wherever you go, you will find me there standing firmly as a lamp post, as a beacon. I will always light your path.

Simant softly kissed Dhara – it appeared to be a divine bliss for Dhara.

That was Simant’s last touch – Dhara still feels imbued with that soft, loving and caring touch and she has kept that touch as a treasure-trove.

Ma- Ma

Kadamba’s voice brought Dhara back to present.

Yes .. Beta

As if Simant has come back as a light to remove the darkness.
2

Ma, you will be happy to see this.

I always become happy to see your face.

Ma, please do not lie-

Kadamba's voice was shaking with joy – besides me and Papa, there is somebody else who gives you unlimited happiness.

Dhara trembled – Manjul's face flashed before her eyes – what .. what?

Yes Ma – Manjul .. Ma … Manjul Vikalpa – my sister Ma .. my sister. Please go through this letter Ma.

Dhara started going through that letter with shivering hand.

Ma

Pranam,

I am thrilled while writing this letter. Right now I am with your pahun Vikalpaji. You must be happy to read this.

I am unable to explain where I had reached with the passage of time. I was also at fault. I was in job – earning a lot which made me arrogant.

Due to this arrogance I failed to get love from a great mother like you -- I also failed to protect the honour and prestige of Papa.

I despised others – never tolerated counter- views – always justified my mistakes.

Now I realize Ma, my main demerit was the fact that I was not able to tolerate criticism of my naiher. Vikalpa's mother used to console me – do not take it otherwise, teasing of kaniya in sasur is a normal practice.

You had also enlightened me on several occasions – do not retaliate. But I was not able to cultivate patience.

I also alienated my god like in-laws. I devastated their feelings through continuous praise of naiher.

3

Ma, why girls lack tolerance and patience these days? Why they are rigid in their approach and attitude? People say – they have inherited these samskar from their parents, but my parents are neither rigid nor arrogant. Papa had yearning for money but that was also for our betterment. How modest and humble you are. How cultured Kadamba Bhaiya is. Why I am so rigid and obstinate?

I feel guilty whenever I see relationship of love-respect between Sas-Bahu in any family.

One day I had visited Shubha. I became enchanted to see the mellifluous relationship which she had with her mother-in-law.

Such a well educated Shubha telling her illiterate mother-in-law – Ma, I do not know anything. I learn everything from you. How can I attain so much amount of knowledge .

No kaniya, you are so well-educated. You do not lack anything – Sas replied laughlingly.

Ma, mere degree and bookish knowledge do not make you knowledgeable. Your experience with life will certainly enrich my knowledge. It is you who have taught me how to behave with others .. how to interact Whatever I am today is mainly because of you.

Sas became overwhelmed with joy to hear these words of daughter-in-law.

Ma, I have expressed the truth. My eyes are laden with tears …. drops started rolling over shubha's cheeks.

Shubha keeps on telling me – If mother-in-law scolds me I accept my mistake even if I have not committed the same. I never retaliate. Whenever she tells me to cook something I never say I know the recipe but I request her for the same.

Ma, how different Shubha is from me.

Ma, thereafter I broke my arrogant isolation – gaining first hand information through interacting with the world.

I realized the family rested on love and faith. Even if a single brick is displaced the house will break down, so is the family. I will not break my sweet nest. Life faces many questions but all of them are not answered.

Pearl always glitters in oyster … in the same manner woman sparkles in the world of love and faith. Ma, woman is the centre of family, the beacon of family.

Ma, woman is not exploited but she lets her to be exploited. If you realize, you also observe the opposite i.e. men are also exploited. In order to give happiness to family men also work as drudge or a plodder.

Ma, relationship between wife-husband is neither contractual nor compromise – there is no place for any doubt in it.

Now I realize the meaning of perennial love – it is within, it accepts both qualities and weaknesses, it takes you beyond your limit, connects your soul to divine soul.

I have wasted six years of my precious life – my irrational past hovers around my eyes as a bad drama and dream –

One day I was returning from office at a late hour – it was raining heavily. I was not able to get any bus, auto or taxi. I was wet and shivering.

What is the matter Bhabhi? – I became relieved to see Sirish, a close friend of Vikalpa who appeared as angel in this hour of crisis. Sirish left me home by his car.

Ma, from this moment onwards, my life took a nosedive – a period of misfortune and woe began.

PART XIV

NAAGPHAANS XIV

Ma, next day thought engulfed me if Shirish had not

reached on time what would have been my condition in that dark rainy night – I felt shiver all over the body. I had even failed to thank him.
All of a sudden Shirish appeared before me from nowhere. Bhabhi, where is Vikalpji?
I became overjoyed to see him – I was just thinking about you.
He laughingly replied – I consider myself very fortunate for this.
Please be seated – I get a cup of tea for you.
Shirish started coming to home on a regular basis. One day I had a fight with Vikalp as he disliked Shirish and his regular visit.
Right now I am unwell – Shirish visited just to know about my well being. I know you have developed a snake like misconception which continuously misguides you through its sting.
Yesterday Vikalp came back from his office early. Shirish almost followed him. Vikalp was shocked to see him. It seemed as if he was bitten by a snake. He visualized – Manjul is unwell. Shirish must have touched her forehead followed by …………….
Shirish had just left and Vikalp screamed – I hate him – I hate you – you are a flying snake – a cobra in the guise of a woman.
Ma, I retaliated and told Vikalp – you always discourage me but look at Shirish –
Shirish -- Shirish – characterless and flirt – you think I do not know his reality.
Look, we are not concerned with his personal life. You must clear your mind of all doubts, suspicion and trash. You should not become a pond or a shallow river – be a large river or a vast ocean.
2
After this incident Vikalp started coming home late in night – sometimes he returned over drunk - I had no option except to lament on my misfortune. His drinking habit went on increasing followed by continuous vomit. I

never told Ma-Babuji about this even when we lived together. I had never experienced this kind of situation before but tried to bear with it.
Vikalp avoided me. Everyday after returning from office he used to confine himself to his room. He opened the doors of room only to receive breakfast, lunch and dinner. Ma and Babuji were surprised to see his changed behavior.
What is this Vikalp? Why you remain confined to your room? You have stopped interacting with us.
Ma, these days I am over-worked – and he again shut the door of his room.
Ma-Babuji told me – Kaniya, why do not you persuade him?
How can I win over him, Ma.
Ma – do not you know - women are capable of beautifying even the deserts and shrubbery area.
I did not utter a single word. For the first time in my life I tried to imbibe the suggestion made by my in-laws. Anticipation of a dark future really shook me up. I trembled to imagine a black snake slowly and gradually sliding and gliding down to my future life.
Time went on – Vikalp started sleeping alone. Our relationship became formal – a relationship based on daily needs i.e. tea, breakfast, lunch and dinner.
Initially I related his changed behavior to his busy work schedule – troubles at his office.
I also came back in the evening as a tired person. I did not take cognizance of his behavior.
In a metropolitan city like Bombay we were blessed with all the amenities of life such as a big bungalow, car, social status and what not. But in the midst of these amenities I had a continuous longing for four letters of love. What good is the bungalow, the cars or the social status if your husband does not love you. Material things are no replacement for human, emotional love.

Otherwise Ma, in this materialistic world everybody is alone. Gone are the days when we had joint families – everybody shared both happiness and sorrow, plenty and paucity.

3

Participation in family activities by all the individual members was its quality. Every member was duty-bound to assume a direct role or responsibility in family. Family was a
unit for all such purposes as socialization, social control, social order etc. Problems used to be solved through love and interaction. Once problem solved, people returned back to work as a light balloon.

No doubt, still we come across some joint families, but now each and every member is guided by his/her own interest and problem. They remain together but only in name.

Ma, I felt alone and secluded. Ma- Babuji also felt loneliness. We lived under the same roof but everybody was alone and secluded. Isolation is devastating to the human psyche. That is why solitary confinement is considered the cruelest of punishments. This is the bane of modern culture and civilization.

One night almost at 12 O' clock I stood near the window of my room waiting for Vikalp.

A car stopped and two persons got down. I saw Vikalp being embraced by a beautiful woman.

I trembled with anger and asked him about the woman.

Vikalp replied – do not beat about the bush. You have no right to ask about her.

Ma, I hold his hand and shouted – I am your wife -- I have the right to ask about her.

If you are my wife then mind your own business silently. I do not like these interferences.

Interference … I have always tolerated your sting – never retaliated. But I shall never tolerate other woman in your life.

Vikalp slapped me – never retaliated – now tolerate this

and he kept on beating me. I am surprised with the fact that how I tolerated this brutality – why I failed to retaliate?
Vikalp developed the habit of beating me without any reason. My position in the house almost got reduced to a housemaid. It not only affected me mentally and physically but wounded my soul. I had never witnessed any husband inflicting injury on his wife. My soul was crying.
You are my mother – who can understand me better than you? Ma- Babuji always sided with their son. Nobody supported me. You are already worried due to Papa. I never tried to add to your tensions by disclosing my pitiable condition. Moreover, why to disclose this in Naiher?
4
I suffered silently. The girl who was so intolerant, carefree, volatile and recalcitrant at parent's home underwent this kind of transformation – how and why I became so tolerant – I am unable to understand. Gandhi, Dayanand, Vivekanand worked towards the empowerment of women, but my submission to brutality really puzzled me. My education, the knowledge I gained mocked at me.
Sometimes I resolved to fight back but the thought dissipated due to lack of support. Who will back me? My soul was yearning like an encaged bird for sweet voice. I faced a perennial question – everybody says marriages are made in heaven. Ma, is this the perennial relationship spanning over several births?
My dreams of living happily ever after had been dashed against the hard walls of reality. Our love is gone, our relationship is dead. He used to feel close, but not now. He no longer enjoys being with me. I never imagined wife-husband sharing this kind of relationship in a civilized society. When the time is adverse and hostile,

everything becomes counter productive. Laughter appears to be blubber. For women every dream is preceded by deceit and deception.
But everything is supposed to come to an end – so is the SIN.

PART XV

NAAGPHAANS XV
Ma, I kept my fingers crossed waiting for divine justice. I kept mum but at the same time kept myself posted of the developments in Vikalp's life.
I was confident about lady's janus- faced nature. She certainly resembled Jekyll-and-Hide, certainly a hydra-headed monster. I knew that for Vikalp, life seemed like ivory tower but in reality it was fool's paradise – flash in the pan. However, in the twinkling of an eye, situation changed.
One night a fully drunk Vikalp was thrown at the door of our home by the cunning woman who had abandoned him after making him a pauper.
It was the real acid test for me. I found myself all at sea. I was able to face this hour of crisis through patience and toleration which you always tried to impart to me. It was the result of my changed behavior, as it has been rightly said a soft answer turns away anger.
And Vikalp repented – Manjul, I am a sinner – I have humiliated you – the goddess of my home, my life. I have distrusted you – how can I forgive myself?
Instantly I hugged him. I knew that in a time of crisis, more than anything, we need to be feel loved. His sense of self-worthiness was rekindled by the fact that I still loved him.
Ma, I had read somewhere, "For love, we will climb mountains, cross sea, traverse desert sands, and endure untold hardships. Without love, mountains become unclimbable,
Sea uncross able, deserts unbearable, and hardships our

plight in life."
Vikalp repeatedly asked for forgiveness and assured me he would try to act differently in future.
2
Ma, I forgave him – I was convinced of the fact that forgiveness is the way of love and life.
Otherwise, you know your daughter very well as an obstinate, intolerant, adamant egoist – a staunch believer in women emancipation movement – I can not believe that I forgave him – my reaction as a champion of gender equality should have been – Vikalp, you ought to be crawling on your knees, begging me for forgiveness. I do not know if I can ever forgive you.
Ma, I just did the opposite as I realized that these were not the words of love but of bitterness and revenge. And for me now love was the most precious treasure and I must preserve it.
Vikalp told me – I pray to god for our perennial love and we must share together hope and despair, joy and sorrow ………
Ma, we receive what we give --- I gave love and was reciprocated in the same way. What to talk of Vikalp, Ma- Babuji –everybody accepted me with open mind and heart. They understood that the past can not be erased, but one can move ahead free from the prejudices.
Ma, today I am overjoyed – it seemed some divine love music has dawned over our family – everyone is imbued with the feeling of love.
Ma, there is a happy piece of news for you – we are planning to visit London on the occasion of Rakshabandhan to seek your blessings for our long and happy married life.
Ma, we also want blessings from Papa – we must find out Papa – I am indebted to you for my existence and to Papa for my ignited and enlightened mind. Ma, I must meet my Papa – my Papa.

3

Dhara was overwhelmed with emotions – tears continuously kept on rolling over her cheeks, all wet with tears.

Tears of happiness – at last Manjul got the love and her family back– the ultimate bliss – moreover, she is also coming to meet her – to meet brother and to meet her father – and she was confident to meet her Papa.

Kadamba was silently looking at her mother's face. His face was also shining with happiness. He also recollected the fun, laughter, joys, fights; every single moment he had shared with Manjul while growing up.

Dhara never made any comparisons between them. She always encouraged their differences, their personalities, their respective tastes, in short their individuality. She always made them feel that both of them were unique and each had its qualities and abilities of their own.

Kadamba specially remembered the two festivals which always strengthened the beautiful relationship and bonding which he had shared with Manjul since their childhood.

On Rakshabandhan, Manjul used to tie a rakhi on his wrist and in turn he promised to help and protect her. Rakhi certainly stood for the love between them. But alas, for the last so many years Manjul was not able to tie the frail thread of rakhi which is considered stronger than iron chains as it permanently binds this beautiful relationship. Now, Kadamba was overjoyed to know that Manjul was expected in London on the occasion of Rakshabandhan.

Kadamba thought – if Manjul comes over to London and ties rakhi on my wrist , then I must promise her my visit to Mumbai on the occasion of Bhatri dutiya [Bhardutia or Bhai dooj].

He recollected the happiness which they had shared. On Bhardutia she always decorated the house with Alpana [Rangoli] with materials such as colored rice, flour, vermilion, flower, petals etc.

4
She performed arti on him and put red tika on his forehead. She also applied rice laced with curd as tika .She then put 5 betel leaves and betel nuts in his palm and while washing his hands she kept on uttering, " Jamuna [Yamuna] naute Jaum [Yama] ke, hum naute chhi apan bhai ke, jaun – jaun Jamuna ke payan badhal jaye, taun – taun hamar bhaik orda badhal jaye."
In return, he not only gave her memorable gifts but also promised to stand by her side in all hardships of life. But due to constraints of time, space, distance and Manjul's marital conditions, he was not able to keep up his promise. But from now onwards, Kadamba was determined not only to renew the tie but also to stand by his loving sister.
Dhara looked at Kadamba – she thought whether Kadamba will be able to have same loving relationship with his sister Manjul once he gets married.
Oh, what and why I am thinking – why this pessimism? Dhara came back from future to the present – why I am always worried for future? Who can be sure about future? Every future passes as present.
Entire house was energized --- Andrew, Reshmi told Dhara to have faith in god – now the entire universe was desperate to meet Simant ------- yes Dhara's Simant. Whether Dara met Simant ----------? Is it possible for Dhara and Simant to come together – Is it possible for earth and sky to join hands together?

PART XVI

NAAGPHAANS XVI

Dhara continued smiling throughout the night. She dreamt of two birds happily chirping and pecking

together. Manjul's letter energized her – her tired and charm less life received a new vigor and fillip.

Dhara felt comfortable – uneasiness vanished. Manjul's faith revitalized her – yes, she is destined to meet Simant – she will find out Simant. – Colored balloons of happiness danced before her dreamy eyes – after such a long wait, she was able to savour some interest and excitement. She felt Simant's cloud like love as raining over her.

Loitering near seashore in darkness – all of a sudden the sun rays replace the darkness with light – it is light everywhere – it is invisible god who lights the sun in order to remove the darkness from the world.

Who has filled the clouds with water – causing lightening and raining. The star-studded sky appeared as countless gifts and candle lights from a parent to a child as if celebrating his birthday.

Dhara went into deep thought – heaven itself exists on this earth. We unfortunate mortals convert it into hell through our unfair actions.

God has blessed both man and nature with the quality to struggle, to fight back – in desert, watermelons grow, near the salty water of sea grows the coconut tree containing sweet and pure water.

Each man has his own existence – finger prints of human beings never match. Man cannot get more than destined and that is also at a particular time. When the time will come I am bound to meet Simant – Dhara's eyes became teary expecting the impossible but inevitable to happen.

2

Time went on – Dhara started counting the seconds, minutes and hours – is it the endless waiting? At last the wait was over – not for Simant but for Manjul.

She arrived here accompanied by Vikalp. Dhara felt happiness everywhere. It was the occasion of Rakshabandhan. Kadamba was overjoyed to see both of them. His long cherished desire to get rakhi tied by Manjul was to be fulfilled at last.

After Rakshabandhan, all of them decided to move from place to place in search of Simant – be it England, Scotland, Wales or Northern Ireland, in short, the United Kingdom.

They visited all the important tourist spots in London. Since Simant was fond of a lavish lifestyle, they also tried to find him at market places such as Harrods, the shops on Regent Street and the boutiques at Beauchamp place. But Simant was nowhere to be found.

They kept on wandering here and there - visiting other important towns such as Oxford, Bath, York, the Lake District, Cambridge, Canterbury, Durham, Winchester, and finally reaching Newcastle on Tyne.

What happened to Simant? Whether he left England and

settled down in Scotland.

Since Newcastle was nearer to Edinburgh in Scotland, they went there. From Edinburgh, they traveled to Aberdeen and then to Glasgow. They became frustrated and disappointed. Finally they came back to London.

Manjul was still confident of meeting her father. Andrew then suggested them to visit Wales. But Kadamba was not excited as he believed that since Wales lagged England in economic development, his father would have never settled there. He rejected the suggestion.

Dhara was now completely exhausted physically, mentally and emotionally. She gave up all hopes of meeting Simant in this life.

Since Manjul had to go back to Mumbai, she decided to visit Northern Ireland for a final search for her father, accompanied by Vikalp. However, they visited just one place i.e. Donegal and returned to London, dazed, shattered and disappointed.

3

Where is Simant? – Now only one place was left i.e. the abode of God. They decided for Bhagwan Satyanarayan katha followed by Hawan for the well being of Simant. Through it they expected miracle to happen.

PART XVII

Kadamba returned from office. Dhara welcomed him with a glass of water followed by tea.

Kadamba – Ma, do you remember my friend Gary.

Dhara – Yes .. yes – when you decided to settle in England he had helped you.

Kadamba – You are correct Ma.

Dhara – Why are you serious beta. I hope everything is fine with Gary.

Kadamba – No Ma. His condition is critical and he is hospitalized in Liverpool Hospital.

Dhara became disturbed, heart beat increased – though she had never met him she felt a surge of emotions inside for young Gary – how can god be so cruel?

Kadamba – Ma, many doctors are attending on him, but unfortunately his disease is yet to be diagnosed – tests after tests are being conducted upon him.

Dhara – Let us go to meet him Kadamba.

Kadamba – Why not Ma? It is Saturday tomorrow – the weekend – we will go tomorrow to meet him.

Man proposes God disposes. Future arrives in present silently and unceremoniously. Man realizes it afterwards.

Dhara was disturbed all through the night – surprised with the fact that even the doctors in England were not able to diagnose the disease – she developed countless apprehensions – Is Simant also hospitalized somewhere

….

2

Shame on me – how can I develop such negative thoughts regarding Simant ?

He must be in the midst of wealth and woman – enjoying the life to utmost limit. And I – Dhara became angry with herself – why positive thoughts did not come to my mind – only negative and negative – apprehensions, accident, illness, hospital – she started reciting Durga Kawach –

‛ Asti guhyatamam vipra sarvabhutopkarkam

Devyastu kawacham punyam tachhrinushva mahamune.

Prathmam Shailputri ch dwitiyam Brahmacharini

Tritiyam Chandraghanteti Kushmandeti chaturthkam .

Panchmam Skandamateti shashtham Katyayini ch

Saptamam Kalratri Mahagauriti chashtmam.

Navmam Sidhidatri ch Navdurga: prakirtita:

Uktanyetani namani Brahmanaiva mahatmana.’

Next day they started for Liverpool. Dhara was impressed with the prosperity of this city. They reached Liverpool Hospital with bouquet containing beautiful yellow flower and a Get Well Soon card. Kadamba also bought some fresh fruits.

Hospital had a fixed meeting time – Kadamba enquired about the ward number, the bed number of Gary. Gary

was trying to regain consciousness, he looked pale and exhausted – Dhara touched his forehead – Dhara's loving touch was soul stirring as well as heart stirring – Gary instantly opened his eyes – tears flowed from his eyes.

Dhara wanted to cry loudly – Gary's parents had already passed away – he was completely alone – he was blessed with such a handsome personality but on death bed – Dhara felt suffocated – she came out of the ward – roaming in gallery, wiping the tears.

Everywhere nurses were on move. Patients were also being moved from operation theatres to I.C.U. or their respective wards on stretchers.

All of a sudden the entire universe moved around her eyes – as if thousands of stars twinkled before her eyes – stretcher raced before her eyes with the patient who resembled Simant. She ran after the stretcher – but the stretcher went inside the operation theatre and the doors got closed.

3

Dhara almost fainted – but she managed to go back to Gary's ward – she caught hold of Kadamba and dragged him out and pointing her fingers towards operation theatre she tried to speak --- O, O, O…

Kadamba – What is the matter Ma?

Everybody present near the ward was worried to see fatigued Dhara. But Dhara was in a different world – the beautiful world of Simant. She had visited England only to meet Simant and today after seeing a glimpse of

diseased Simant she almost became mad.

She started dragging Kadamba towards operation theatre but was not able to utter any word except – O, O, O… and once she reached near operation theatre, she fainted.

Sisters, Ward boys all of them narrated the sequence of event which just took place – she saw a patient on the stretcher, ran after him till operation theatre, then went back to ward

and before she fainted dragged Kadamba to the operation theatre.

Kadamba thought – is that patient my father… certainly … certainly.

Kadamba took limping Dhara to visitor's room and helped her to relax on a sofa. Kadamba then went into a deep thought. Dhara was babbling – remove your doubts – he is your father.

Kadamba – But everyone said he is an old man.

Dhara – No Kadamba, my eyes will never fail to recognize your father – Kadamba .. beta you please go and enquire about him.

Kadamba then collected all the facts about him – the old man was in this hospital since last one month. One English lady had admitted him here and she never came back to see him. His lungs – liver were damaged due to over intake of liquor – he was in coma for the last 15 days. Doctors were not operating him as nobody was there to sign the 'risk' document. Moreover, even for doctors his death was imminent and inevitable.

Kadamba immediately contacted Manjul, Vikalp and Reshmi, Andrew on phone. He himself continuously kept on praying to god for the well being of his father – yes he needed his father for his Ma, for himself, for Manjul …

Manjul, Vikalp, Andrew and Reshmi - they immediately reached the hospital.

Tears started flowing from their eyes to see Dhara's condition – as if it was not Simant but Dhara who was in coma.

After 7 hours the doors of operation theatre opened – unconscious Simant was lying on the stretcher – white beard, white hair – really in a disheveled condition.

Manjul caressed her mother. Her tears started falling down on Dhara's hair.

Kadamba tried to look for the beautiful face of his father – staring deeply and constantly at the face of the old man.

Ward boy took Simants's stretcher to I.C.U.

Visitor room was well equipped with call bells – a source to know the latest condition of the patient.

Kadamba pressed the call bell – a house surgeon came in – Kadamba enquired about the condition of his father.

Doctor – His condition was very critical. But why you are asking?

Kadamba – I am his unfortunate son.

Doctor – Where were you for the last one month?

5

Kadamba – Doctor, this is a long story – but the lady sitting here is my mother and the wife of the patient – last year she had come here from India in search of my father …

Doctor – One lady had left him in this hospital in a very critical condition. After that nobody was there to look after him – today due to emergency situation we had to perform the operation. Due to God's grace operation was successful – God is great.

Kadamba – Doctor, can you give me details of that lady?

Doctor smiled and replied – My brother – here you can not rely on three – work, women and weather. That is why we pay utmost respect to the Indian lady. However, we treated this patient with great care – after three or four days he regained consciousness and uttered some name – some Indian name but I am not able to recollect ……..

One nurse who was carefully listening to the Doctor intervened and said – I remember the name.

Kadamba asked impatiently – Please tell the name.

Sister or nurse – It was Dhara, yes … yes, Dhara.

Hearing this, Dhara got a new strength, vigor, zeal and a new meaning to her life. God has brought Dhara and Simant together. Her quest for Simant ended but her journey for a sweet and memorable life began.

THE END

This translation is dedicated to VIDEHA MITHILA RATNA late LALAN KUMAR VERMA who had celebrated his last birthday on 17th October, 2001, the auspicious day of Kalash sthapan and the very next day, 18th October, 2001 his immortal soul got reunited with PARAM BRAHMA.

After his Matriculation from Saharsa, Lalan Kumar Verma did his B.Sc. [Hons.] in Physics in 1962 from famous Science College, Patna University. He did his LL.B from Patna Law College in 1964. He was known as Prince of Dumra among his friends and colleagues as he came from a famous zamindar family. In the meantime, he won the All India Murphy Competition for the best play back singer. He was also selected to the post of Executive by the Indian Tobacco company. Due to illness, he was not able to go to USA for further study in the field of nuclear science. He wanted to practice in Patna High Court. But due to the compulsions of zamindar family, he had to start practice in Saharsa District Court in 1965

In 1970, he was appointed as Additional Public Prosecutor of Saharsa district. At a very young age, in1979 he was appointed as the Public Prosecutor of Saharsa district which at that time also included Madhepura and Supaul. As Public Prosecutor, his work was of high standard and his honesty was vouched for. He also worked as Special Advocate for Bihar State Electricity Board, Food Corporation of India, Bihar State Cooperative Land Development Bank, Bihar State Water

Development Corporation, Bihar State Warehousing Corporation, Saharsa Municipality, Bihar State Road Transport Corporation. For a brief period he also taught at RMM Law College, Saharsa.

In 1990, he shifted his practice to Patna High Court, thereby realizing the dream which he had long cherished for. He was an expert in civil, criminal, consumer and environmental matters. As a humble son of Mithila, he always espoused the cause of Maithili and Mithila.

[Note – We are thankful to Gajendra ji for the space he readily provided in his esteemed e Magazine Videha for this translated version of Naagphhans. We hope the readers must have found this translated version interesting irrespective of the limitations and the shortcoming on the part of the translators. Wish you all a very happy Vijayadashmi and a glittering Diwali.and Chhatha puja. Videha's Laghu Katha Anka has taken it to new heights of glory and success. May Goddess Durga bestow her blessings on Videha family which is now truly a global family.]